

LIFE AND TIMES IN SHOE CITY

THE SHOE WORKERS OF LYNN

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LIFE AND TIMES IN SHOE CITY

THE SHOE WORKERS OF LYNN



A Special Exhibition
14 September 1979 – 27 January 1980

Essex Institute
SALEM · MASSACHUSETTS

© 1979 by Essex Institute ISBN 0-88389-100-X

Cover illustration: Lithograph, *Manufacturing Center of Lynn, Mass., 1879*, drawn and published by O. H. Bailey & J. C. Hazen, Boston.

This booklet has also been published by the Essex Institute as Volume 115, No. 4 of the Institute's *Historical Collections*. A limited edition of 500 copies, with special cover, has been issued for general sale during the special exhibition at the Institute, September 1979 through January 1980.

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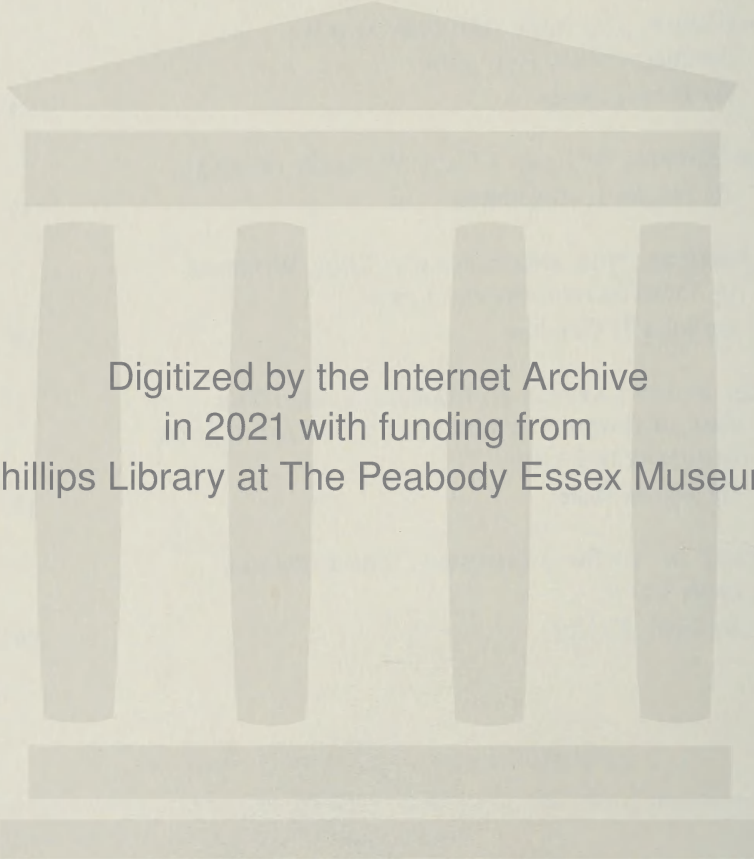
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Life and Times in Shoe City: The Shoe Workers of Lynn

PREFACE

THE growth of the shoe industry in Essex County during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries dramatically illustrated the changes in the region's economy as the industrial age matured. As agricultural and maritime activity waned and railroads criss-crossed Essex County, connecting almost every town with Boston and a growing national market, the textile and shoe industries became the county's economic base. The landscape was transformed as towns such as Haverhill, North Andover, Peabody, Salem, and Lynn grew into major industrial cities. The social impact of technological development and urban concentration on the people of one Essex County town, Lynn, is the focus of the Essex Institute's special exhibition, "Life and Times in Shoe City: The Shoe Workers of Lynn," and of the topical essays collected here.

The exhibition brings together a tremendous variety of visual and oral material and artifacts gathered from the community which recover and interpret the social history of a largely unappreciated enterprise—the shoe industry—and the people who built up that enterprise—the shoe workers. The tools and products of the early hand-craftsmanship era when shoe workers labored in small "ten-footer" shops behind their homes contrast dramatically with a setting in the exhibition representing the interior of an early twentieth-century factory with electrically powered machines. Photographs of the workers crowded into the large brick factories built at the turn of the century suggest social and technological changes caused by the many inventions which revolutionized the shoe industry. While the opening sections of the exhibition focus on the workplace, other parts concentrate on the environment of the home and the private lives of the industrialists and the workers. Photographs, documents, and artifacts are arranged to suggest contrasting styles of living and document housing patterns around 1915, a peak year for the shoe industry and for the growth of Lynn. At the center of this part of the exhibition are two period room settings, one a parlor of 1869 from

the Samuel M. Bubier mansion, the other a shoe worker's kitchen in one of the triple-decker tenements which abounded in Lynn at the beginning of the twentieth century. "Shoe City," as Lynn was called, grew into a congested metropolis of over 68,000 people, and photographs, memorabilia, and architectural fragments of the major places of commercial activity—theatres, restaurants, grocery and retail stores—as well as materials which boosted Lynn as the "Shoe City of the World" are combined in this exhibit to round out a picture of the city's incredible energy as the twentieth century began.

A section entitled "Human Networks" documents the cultural and ethnic plurality of Lynn's growing population. Irish, Canadians, Greeks, Poles, Italians, and many central Europeans emigrated to Lynn throughout the period, and their ethnic churches, clubs, and taverns gave Lynn a colorful and robust flavor. The concluding section of the exhibition, "Remembering Lynn," suggests methods in which Lynners may recover, interpret, and preserve their rich past and considers present plans to revive the economic and social fiber of the community.

A project such as this exhibition and its related community programs is a complex and lengthy undertaking, involving the work and enthusiasm of many contributors, all of whom are deserving of great appreciation. Keith Melder, the principal historian and guest curator, was responsible for the conceptualization of the themes of the exhibition, its related programs, and this publication. His knowledge and understanding of American social history have been an inspiration to all of us who worked on the exhibition and wrote articles to accompany it. Mr. Melder was ably assisted by two interns from the Boston University American and New England Studies Program, Martin Blatt and Naomi Rosenblum. These three individuals and our other two authors, John Cumbler and Pamela Guren, merit our thanks for their fine essays. The Essex Institute museum staff—John Wright, Bettina Norton, Cynthia Cetlin, and Ann Wallace—have also contributed their talents to the research and installation of the exhibition. Other staff members have helped in essential ways in the creation of the exhibition, especially Katherine W. Richardson, who has meticulously copy-edited and assembled this publication.

Under a planning grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, we had the assistance of several consultants: Mary H. Blewett, Charles Collazzo, Paul Faler, John J. Fox, Arthur Kaledin, and Lary Ro-

senblatt. Special thanks are due to Mr. Collazzo, whose vision for many years has been the establishment of a museum of the shoe industry in Lynn, and to Professor Fox of Salem State College, who has organized an oral history program for our project and taught us the many resources of the oral history tradition. To him and his students, to Professor Wayne Anderson of Northeastern University and his students, and to the people of Lynn who related their histories to the interviewers, we owe a great deal. Their many hours of personal contact and communication have formed an essential part of our exhibition material.

The exhibition could of course never have taken place without the interest and enthusiasm of a number of other people in the Lynn community. Mayor Antonio Marino and the many offices of City Hall were helpful in gathering information and material; Barbara Shaler of the Lynn Public Library and her staff and Faith Magoun and Harold Walker of the Lynn Historical Society offered their resources and knowledge in numerous ways. Many others within the community have been willing to share their precious relics of the past with us and with the viewers of the exhibition, and to them we are most grateful. Allen Moore designed and created the exhibition environment for the large collection of material we have gathered, so that its historical context may be understood and appreciated by all who view it. Mark Sipson of Old Sturbridge Village has contributed his knowledge of the construction of a shoe.

Generous grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities—to support both the planning and implementation stages of this project—have made the exhibition and its many programs possible. Through this exhibition, the Essex Institute hopes to reach a broad audience in Essex County and to promote interest in the county's industrial past, which has shaped so much of our contemporary lives.

ANNE FARNAM

Curator

BRYANT F. TOLLES, JR.

Director and Librarian

Lost Lynn: The Shoe Industry and Its Architecture, 1750–1910

By PAMELA GUREN*

DURING the nineteenth century the rapidly changing façade of Lynn, Massachusetts, was largely shaped by the growth and development of a single industry—the manufacture of shoes and boots. Unlike Lowell and other contemporary single-industry towns, neither the city nor its industry flourished overnight as a monument to the genius, or perhaps entrepreneurship of a single man. Instead, both evolved as the result of inexorably intertwined forces and personalities.

Lynn's shoe factory buildings provide many valuable insights into the history of the development of both the city and the industry. Although written and photographic documentation of the "Shoe City" years exists, much of the important physical evidence has been sacrificed in an effort to erase the past and create new symbols of progress and prosperity. Many significant buildings, however, have remained intact. These buildings are interesting examples of the stylistic development of shoe factory architecture, and they clearly show the influence of the shoe industry on the development of the "cityscape."

Records show that Lynn's first shoemakers, Edmund Bridges and Philip Kertland, settled in the town in 1635. Here, as in other Essex County villages, most farmers, long accustomed to making shoes for their families, had a working knowledge of the shoemaking process. Over the next one hundred years, the craft of shoemaking slowly developed into a flourishing home industry. Few men turned to shoemaking as a year-round occupation; rather it provided seasonal employment during the long winter months. Until 1750, only three Lynn shoemakers, William Gray, John Mansfield, and Benjamin Newhall, boasted

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enough business to employ resident journeymen and apprentices in their home shops.¹

The arrival of a Welsh shoemaker, John Adam Dagyr, in 1750 could not have been interpreted as an apocalyptic event by the townspeople of Lynn. Dagyr, however, shared his knowledge of the finest European methods of shoemaking and “raised the humble occupation almost to the level of a fine art.”² As a result, Lynn’s prominence in the New England shoe market escalated so rapidly that in 1764 the *Boston Gazette* enthusiastically reported that “it is certain that women’s shoes made at Lynn do now exceed those usually imported, in strength and beauty, but not in price.”³ By 1795 two hundred master shoemakers and six hundred journeymen and apprentices were turning out more than three hundred thousand pairs of shoes a year.⁴

Using tools and methods of construction introduced by Dagyr, Lynn shoemakers continued to meet the growing demand for their products. By 1810 more than one million pairs of shoes and boots were produced annually.⁵ Lynn was a typical small New England town (aside from its myriad of tiny shoe shops, which were less common in other Essex County villages). Market Street and the Common formed the nucleus of the town. Neat rows of modest clapboard houses and business establishments reflected the social, ethnic, and economic homogeneity of the townspeople. The distinctive clapboard “ten-footer” shoe shops symbolized the craft or home-industry stage of the developing shoe industry in Lynn (fig. 1). Examples of the ten-footers may be found today at the Essex Institute in Salem, the Lynn Historical Society, and the Wenham Historical Society and Museum.

Despite the diversity of the product and the independence of the individual shoemaker, the form and function of the home shoe shop changed little throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁶ So called because of its diminutive dimensions, the ten-footer

1. D. Hamilton Hurd, *History of Essex County, Massachusetts, with Biographical Sketches . . . of Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1888), p. 284.

2. Hurd, p. 283.

3. *Boston Gazette*, 21 October 1764; quoted in “Shoe Manufacturing in Lynn from Its Settlement to 1892,” *The Boot and Shoe Recorder* (Boston, 10 August 1892), p. 5.

4. *The Boot and Shoe Recorder*, p. 19.

5. James R. Newhall, *The Essex Memorial for 1836, Embracing a Register of the County* (Salem, Massachusetts: Published at the Bookstore of Henry Whipple, 1836), p. 150.

6. “Early Shoe Shops: The Little ‘Ten Footers’ Which Once Dotted Lynn’s Landscape,” *Lynn Daily Evening Item* (7 September 1879), pp. 7–12.

ranged in size from ten to fourteen feet square. As many as six or eight cobblers' benches or "berths" could be accommodated in this small space, "each bench placed far enough apart from the next to allow the arm to swing out as the shoemaker sewed with a full length thread."⁷ Nestled under the gabled roof, the garrett or "cockloft" served as a storage area for scrap leather and supplies.

In Lynn the ten-footer occupied a prominent place among the array of backyard outbuildings until the late 1840s (fig. 2). The narrow home/work sphere allowed the shoemaker to divide his time between his craft and his farm, and encouraged the participation of the entire family in the shoemaking process. There was at this time no need for the centralization of the industry. Because the shoes were crafted entirely by hand, the availability of an abundant power supply was not a locational consideration. The proximity of an organized transportation system was of no concern to the shoemakers. So great was the demand for the Lynn product that representatives from Boston wholesale houses journeyed by horseback from shop to shop distributing leather and findings in exchange for finished shoes.⁸

Between 1830 and 1850 a series of subtle changes in the organization of the shoe industry catalyzed the transformation of the quiet rural village into a fledgling manufacturing city. A loosely knit network of independent shoemakers and their families, constituting three-quarters of the town's population, was by this time turning out more than two million pairs of boots and shoes annually.⁹ The growing magnitude of both the industry and the market gave rise to the need for the formalization of the home craft system. Consumers demanded a more standardized product. Shoemakers, in turn, demanded cash rather than material payments for their labor.

An increasing number of farmer-shoemakers turned from farming to shoemaking as a full-time occupation. The focus of the shoe industry gradually shifted from the ten-footer to the central shop or manufactory as these "shoe manufacturers," realizing the benefits of establishing central workshops, opened their businesses on Market Street and around the Common. The completion of the Eastern Railroad in 1838, linking

7. David N. Johnson, *Sketches of Lynn* (Lynn, Massachusetts: Thomas P. Nichols, Printer, 1880), p. 23.

8. Hurd, p. 150.

9. *The Boot and Shoe Recorder*, p. 5.

Lynn and other Essex County towns with Boston, facilitated the receipt of raw materials and the distribution of finished shoes. So great was the impact of the improved transportation system that many manufacturers soon began to cluster their shops around the railroad station at Central Square, forming the nucleus of the town's first clearly defined manufacturing district.¹⁰

The movement from the ten-footer to the central shop and its subsequent impact on the physical development of the community was, at first, barely perceptible, but gradually there was a change as most shoe manufacturers moved cautiously into their new role. Some leased space in existing buildings, while others, often forming partnerships, built small shops, expanding them as the volume of their business increased. The pattern of mobility followed by many of the early shoe manufacturers is vividly illustrated by the chronology of the career of Christopher Robinson, one of the town's most prominent early shoemakers. Robinson began making shoes in 1818, presumably in a backyard ten-footer on his North Common Street property. He built a sixteen-by-twenty-eight-foot wood-frame shoe shop at that location in 1822.¹¹ In 1832 Robinson and his partner, Lucian Newhall, constructed a new factory on the other side of the Common, at the corner of South Common and Shepard Streets.¹² Ten years later, they enlarged the structure. Robinson sold the factory in 1848 to Newhall, who "removed it to the land of J. B. Johnson opposite the frog pond on the Common."¹³ He built a new shop on the site, one of the first brick shoe manufactories in Lynn (fig. 3). Though built on a residential scale, the shop was large enough to accommodate the operations of Robinson and his three partners. Robinson retired and sold his business to Stephen Oliver, Jr., in 1855.¹⁴

Nothing in the design of Robinson's shop or the countless other central shops and manufactories constructed between 1830 and 1850 explicitly labeled them as industrial buildings. Like the old Town Hall, built in 1816, both the form and the decorative details of these barnlike struc-

10. H. F. Walling, *A Topographical Map of Essex County, Massachusetts* (Boston: Smith and Morley, 1856). By 1879, 49 of the 74 shoe manufacturers listed on the accompanying map of Lynn were located near Central Square.

11. William Stone, "Lynn and Its Old-Time Shoemakers' Shops," *Lynn Historical Society Register* 15(1911):88.

12. *The Boot and Shoe Recorder*, p. 101.

13. *The Boot and Shoe Recorder*, p. 47.

14. Johnson, p. 477.

tures, whether built of brick or wood, were loosely borrowed from the popular Greek Revival style. Many of these wooden structures, like the domestic architecture of the era, were of clapboard and were embellished with Doric pilasters and dentiled cornices. Robinson's factory, constructed of pressed brick with sandstone lintels and door surrounds, reflected the Grecian influence in the articulation of the pedimented gable on the street façade. A narrow band of sandstone functioned as an entablature. This reference was carried one step further in the double factory built by Micajah Pratt and Samuel Boyce in 1850, where four courses of simple raised brickwork acted as a frieze.¹⁵

Only the growing number of abandoned ten-footers, "transformed into hen houses and coal pens" or "moved and joined to some house to make a snug little kitchen," testified to the genesis of centralization and the demise of the home craft system.¹⁶ Although advertisements placed by "manufacturers of women's, misses', and children's boots and shoes" dominated the pages of the *Lynn Directory* for 1850, the town had not yet acquired the usual characteristics of a mid-nineteenth-century manufacturing city. Edwin Whitefield's 1849 *View of Lynn*, taken from High Rock, conveys the picturesque quality of the townscape. Trees, fences, and church steeples dominate the scene, punctuated by a single smokestack. Only seventeen brick structures had been built; and only six buildings, of any material, were more than two stories high. In defense of this rural ideal, a group of Lynn mechanics challenged a movement to acquire a city charter on the grounds that "the town of Lynn is not compact and built up in high blocks of buildings."¹⁷ The mechanics' broadside went unheeded, and the City of Lynn was incorporated in 1850.

The acquisition of the City Charter marked a turning point in the history of Lynn and the development of the shoe industry. Although the implementation of the central shop system had done much to benefit both the craftsman and the consumer, the burgeoning industry was still plagued with innumerable problems. Individual manufacturers remained dependent upon the efforts of as many as four hundred outworkers.¹⁸ Consequently, the quality of a firm's product reflected the disparate

15. *Directory of the City of Lynn* (1854), advertisement.

16. Johnson, p. 341.

17. "Reasons and Facts against the Pending Charter for a City," 15 April 1850; quoted in Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 124.

18. "Lynn Scrapbook," vol. 30 (Lynn Public Library, unpublished), p. 158.

skills of the craftsmen in its employ. Production schedules, although dictated by the market and the manufacturers, were often hampered by the irregular working hours kept by the outworkers. Even in those shops where most of the work was handled by journeymen, the lack of direct supervision frequently resulted in the production of substandard merchandise. There finally emerged among the Lynn manufacturers the acceptance of the philosophy that "industrial organization, in order to secure uniformity of output, economy of time, labor and stock, demanded foremen to superintend, and regular hours of steady work on the part of the men and women employed in all processes of shoemaking."¹⁹

Great strides in manufacturing technology diminished the importance of the individual craftsman and led to the rise of the entrepreneurial manufacturer. In 1852 John Woolredge, A. Scudder Moore, and George W. Keene introduced to their factories the first Howe and Singer sewing machines adapted to stitching leather uppers. Cutting and splitting machines and an array of other labor-saving devices soon followed. John Woolredge further revolutionized the Lynn shoe industry by installing a steam power generator in his factory in 1858. By 1865 most of the city's shoe factories had been converted to steam power (fig. 4). The advent of mechanization was accompanied by a rapid increase in annual production rates. Over ten million pairs of shoes were produced in 1870.²⁰ More significantly, the introduction of power machinery into the factory facilitated the development of mass-production systems and created a division of labor among the workers. No longer was the manufacturer dependent upon the farmer-craftsman's mastery of the entire shoemaking process. Instead, shoemaking could be carried out by semi-skilled operatives, each trained to perfect a single phase of the process. Thus, the factory was transformed from an artisan's workshop into "a kind of supermachine—a gross, cacophonous exaggeration of the elegant principles of a clock."²¹

That the intent of the factory system was the standardization of the product and process of shoemaking was not easily readable in the façades of the shoe factories built between 1855 and 1875. Of the thirty-eight factories constructed during this period, few expressed the utilitarian aesthetic associated with the city's later industrial buildings. Rather,

19. Dawley, p. 98.

20. *Boot and Shoe Recorder*, p. 5.

21. Dawley, p. 90.

the often whimsical façades disguised the true purpose of the buildings and enabled them to blend harmoniously with neighboring public and commercial structures. By this time, the manufacturer had come to view his factory not as a shell enveloping the mechanics of the manufacturing system, but as a monument to his personal prosperity and community importance. The Greek Revival style, associated with the ideals of democracy and egalitarianism, fell out of favor as the dichotomy between the worker and the manufacturer grew. Buoyed by the wave of romantic eclecticism which had begun to sweep American architecture, the manufacturers turned instead to the new “fancy” styles which evoked images of the grandeur of an earlier European era.

One by one, the modest clapboard structures which had lined Market Street were replaced with three- and four-story commercial and manufacturing buildings. Most of these new structures, broadly categorized as examples of the Victorian Commercial style, reflected the popular revival of academic and vernacular Italian designs. Samuel Bubier, twice mayor of Lynn and one of the city’s most prosperous manufacturers during the 1850s and 1860s, built his first and best-documented Market Street shoe factory in 1855.²² Segmental arch windows and paired brackets at the cornice line graced the three-story wood-frame structure, designed in the vernacular Italianate style. In 1869 Bubier expanded the factory by adding a fourth floor to the existing structure and building a four-story Oxford Street extension. The new addition was treated in the more academic Italian Renaissance style with heavy stone corner quoins and a bracketed cornice line. Tall, narrowly spaced round arch windows created an arcaded effect on all three stories, particularly well articulated on the ground floor level.

Though built on a smaller scale than the Bubier factory, many of the Munroe Street manufactories were also designed in the Italian Renaissance style. Harrison Newhall’s factory, one of only a few extant examples of the elaborate factories of this period, was built in 1869 to replace his wood-frame manufactory lost in a fire earlier the same year.²³ The pressed-brick structure, now occupied by the Lynn Hardware Company, is embellished with limestone corner quoins and elaborately decorated window lintels. An 1885 view of the building, then occupied by the Hotel Oxford, shows that the bracketed cornice was once topped

22. Stone, p. 91.

23. *Lynn Transcript* (Lynn, Massachusetts, 30 January 1869), p. 2.

with wrought-iron cresting.²⁴ The original entrance, flanked with columns, was spanned by a broad elliptical arch.

If the stylistic nuances of the factory buildings of this period do indeed testify to the increasing prosperity and pomposity of the individual shoe manufacturers, then it is valid to accept Alan Dawley's premise that the Lynn City Hall, completed in 1867, "was designed as a monument to the business interests of the city."²⁵ The dedication ceremonies for the new building were colored by references to the symbolic connection between the City Hall and the "modern" shoe factory. One speaker boasted of "the long stride from the unpretentious shoemakers' shops, the ten-footers of 1827, to those magnificent shoe factories of the later day . . . from the old Town Hall on the Common, with its bare beams and scraggy walls, to that great model of beauty and grandeur, the new City Hall of Lynn."²⁶ Lynn's Republican shoe scions had long advocated the replacement of the old Town Hall. Much to their relief, it was destroyed by fire in 1864. There rose from the ashes a "dazzling, new, gay-plumed phoenix,"²⁷ a lavishly ornamented building designed in the style "known as the Italian Renaissance, a style which may be said to adapt itself so naturally to the obvious requirements of the more dignified municipal structures of the day, as to appear almost to have grown out of them" (fig. 5).²⁸ Constructed of pressed brick, the new City Hall epitomized the romantic grandeur of the era. The heavy corner quoins, string courses, window lintels, and other exterior details were executed in Connecticut brown freestone.²⁹ Every possible architectural detail was pasted upon its surface, including a Corinthian-columned portico, bracketed window pediments, a dentiled cornice, balustrades, and a dormer-pierced mansard roof topped with wrought-iron cresting. An equally ornate clock tower rose three more stories above this ostentatious base.

The crowning triumph of the new City Hall kept the spirit of romantic eclecticism alive throughout the 1870s. Despite a major economic slump from 1873 to 1874, Lynn shoe manufacturers continued to build

24. *Lynn City Directory* (1885), advertisement.

25. Dawley, p. 126.

26. *Lynn City Hall, November 30, 1867 Dedication Ceremonies & History of Events Leading to Its Erection* (Lynn: Thomas P. Nichols, 1869), p. 80.

27. Dawley, p. 125.

28. *Lynn City Hall*, p. 114.

29. *Lynn City Hall*, p. 115.

larger, more elaborate factory buildings. The four-story Central Building, built on Market Street in 1876 as a double factory for two or more manufacturers, articulated the fully matured application of Renaissance detailing to manufacturing buildings (fig. 6).³⁰ The basement and first floor were linked by round arches resting on tall rustic piers, creating the illusion of a grand arcade sweeping around the Market and Oxford Street façades. A variety of fenestration details carried the arcade motif throughout the upper floors of the building. On the Market Street façade, symmetrically placed bracketed balconies marked the center axis of each half of the factory.

On those streets dominated by factories rather than by a mixture of commercial, institutional, and manufacturing buildings, the design of the shoe factory expressed a more distinct industrial character. In contrast to the meticulous detail of the Central Block, the Sweetser Block, also constructed in 1876, appears austere and massive. There is no Renaissance symmetry in this building. Instead, the irregularities of both the plan and the façade reflect the peculiarities of the corner site. The building conveys the sense of regimented utilitarianism that the maturation of the factory system represented. Only the arched window lintels and tarred brick stringcourses, vaguely reminiscent of the Ruskin-inspired Venetian Gothic aesthetic of the 1860s, distinguish this building from later wholly utilitarian factory designs.³¹

By 1879 Lynn had mushroomed seemingly overnight into the compact and densely piled-up manufacturing city against which the mechanics' broadside of 1850 had argued so eloquently. More than 480 streets criss-crossed the city.³² Due largely to the influx of factory operatives, the population had grown to more than forty thousand.³³ In the heart of the city, where smokestacks far outnumbered church steeples, the haphazard juxtaposition of brick and wood, open spaces and high piles of buildings, and commercial and manufacturing structures reflected the coming-of-age of the industrial city. Bailey and Hazen's 1879 view of the *Manufacturing Center of Lynn, Mass.* vividly portrays the per-

30. James R. Newhall, *Centennial Memorial of Lynn, Massachusetts* (Lynn, Massachusetts: Thomas B. Breare, 1876).

31. Johnson, p. 478.

32. James R. Newhall, *History of Lynn, Massachusetts, Including Lynnfild, Saugus, Swampscott, and Nahant* (Lynn, Massachusetts: Printed for the Author, 1883), p. 81.

33. *Manufacturing Center of Lynn, Mass., 1879*, lithograph (Boston: O. H. Bailey and J. C. Hazen, 1879).

vative impact of the shoe industry on the city (fig. 7). Four- and five-story buildings, many explicitly labeled as shoe factories, dominate the cityscape. On Market Street, where the last residential structure had been removed in 1877, elaborate factory buildings complemented the elegance of the public and commercial structures that lined the city's most fashionable street. Oxford and Munroe Streets, Central Avenue, and Union Street were crowded with wooden and brick factories interspersed with boarding houses, hotels, and small shoe-related manufacturing concerns. Dense rows of factory buildings on Willow, Almont, and Blake Streets stood back-to-back with the workers' tenements. Yet within a few blocks of this dense urban jungle, the last vestiges of rural Lynn prevailed—parks, woods, and a network of pleasant residential neighborhoods.

As investments in factory buildings and the density of the manufacturing district increased, the threat of fire loomed heavily in the minds of the manufacturers. On 25 December 1868, the city's most serious fire to date had razed a section of Market Street, causing more than \$300,000 damage to the Lyceum, Frazer's Block, and one of Samuel Bubier's buildings.³⁴ The Munroe Street fire in 1869 had destroyed four shoe manufactories valued at more than \$170,000.³⁵ To protect their enterprises from further losses, the shoe manufacturers began to champion the replacement of the city's volunteer fire-fighting system with a professional fire department. They realized also that a skilled fire-fighting force alone could not easily quell a major conflagration. Somehow, water had to be delivered quickly and under pressure to the scene of a blaze. By 1875, due largely to the efforts of the shoe manufacturers, the city had established a professional fire department and installed an \$800,000 system of water pipes punctuated with a network of strategically placed fire hydrants.³⁶

The development of the "slow-burning" or "fireproof" structure after the Chicago fire of 1871 greatly influenced the direction of factory design. Nearly every manufacturing city soon implemented fire ordinances governing the construction of new buildings and the alteration of extant structures, based on those principles laid down by the Chicago architects. Lynn was no exception. *An Ordinance for the Prevention of Fire*

34. *Lynn Daily Evening Item*, 26 December 1868 (hereafter referred to as *Lynn Item*).

35. *Lynn Transcript*, 30 January 1869.

36. Dawley, p. 128.

and the Preservation of Life was issued on 26 June 1888. It defined as “fire limits” most of the area covered by the city’s business and manufacturing districts. Within these limits it was ordained that “no person shall erect or cause to be erected, any building . . . unless the outer walls shall be composed of brick or stone and mortar, or iron, and no person shall make any addition to any wooden building.”³⁷

The ordinance specified the range of noncombustible materials acceptable for both interior and exterior construction and set standards for the strength of these materials. It dictated methods of building construction and outlined procedures for affixing exterior ornamental details and for installing elevators, furnaces, and internal utility systems. More specifically, the owner of any building more than two stories high was required to install fire escapes to insure the safety of the occupants. To contain minor blazes and stop the spread of fire from building to building, every window of each building was to be equipped with fire-proof shutters, to be closed in the event of fire as well as at the end of each business day.³⁸

On Tuesday morning, 26 November 1889, the central manufacturing district hummed with activity. Business was flourishing. By the end of the year, Lynn shoe factories would have produced more than fifteen million pairs of shoes.³⁹ Suddenly, the serious business of manufacturing shoes came to a grinding halt. A fire had broken out in a morocco shop located in the Mower Brothers’ Block, on the corner of Almont and Blake Streets. Despite the precautions taken by the manufacturers and the stringent requirements of the fire laws approved just sixteen months earlier, the blaze raged out of control. It quickly engulfed neighboring factories on Willow, Blake, and Almont Streets. Fueled by the dense concentration of wooden buildings clustered around Central Square, the fire spread rapidly to Union, Broad, and Washington Streets. Within seven hours it had swept throughout most of the manufacturing district, reducing everything in its path to piles of smoldering rubble. Eighty-seven shoe manufacturers and 75 “shoe and leather houses” had been wiped out by the time the fire had run its course.⁴⁰ In all, 338

37. City of Lynn, *An Ordinance for the Prevention of Fire and the Preservation of Life* (Lynn, Massachusetts: Woodbury S. Prentiss, 1888), p. 5.

38. *An Ordinance for the Prevention of Fire . . .*, p. 24.

39. *Boot and Shoe Recorder*, p. 5.

40. *Lynn Item*, 27 November 1889.

buildings were leveled, including 38 brick blocks, 158 mercantile and manufacturing buildings, 129 residential structures, 12 stables, and a church.⁴¹

Before the ashes had cooled, the merchants, businessmen, and manufacturers rallied to assess their losses and plan for the reconstruction of the city. There arose a strong sense of community interest and involvement in the revitalization of the city; this trend was chronicled by the *Lynn Daily Evening Item*, which resumed publication the day after the fire on a borrowed press located in a tent erected on the rubble of the *Item* building. Within a week after the fire, its pages were filled with letters to the editor, notices of public meetings, and illustrated proposals, all directed toward planning for the city's redevelopment.

The fire dealt a decisive blow to the unchecked development that had resulted from thirty years of exponential growth. It provided an opportunity to impose order where chaos had prevailed. For the first time since the town had become a city, elements of planning and control were introduced. Distinct manufacturing, business, and commercial districts replaced the discordant mixture of unrelated establishments. Central Square and Exchange Street were redeveloped with office buildings and banks. Market Street (although relatively unscathed by the fire) and Union Street were more clearly redefined as commercial centers. Manufacturing activities were then concentrated within the more-densely redeveloped sections of Willow, Blake, Almont, and Mulberry Streets; on Union Street between Central and Liberty Squares; and on Broad Street, south of the Exchange Street junction.⁴² Many of the city's dead-end streets were widened and cut through to improve traffic circulation. Corner lots were cut back to provide wider, less-congested intersections.⁴³

Despite the complete devastation wrought by the fire, the shoe manufacturers refused numerous offers to relocate in temporarily rent-free accommodations scattered throughout New England.⁴⁴ Instead, they recommitted their energies and investments to the shoe industry and the city that had nurtured it. The material costs of the fire were far out-

41. *Lynn Item*, 27 November 1889.

42. *Lynn Item*, 2 December 1889.

43. *Lynn Item*, 2 December 1889.

44. *Lynn Item*, 30 November 1889.

weighed by the opportunities it created to enlarge and improve the city's manufacturing facilities. Obsolete buildings were replaced with "modern" factories designed to maximize output and efficiency, as well as to accommodate the ever-increasing array of machinery required by the fully mechanized factory system. The reconstruction of the shoe industry, like that of the city, began in earnest as soon as the rubble was cleared. To keep the community abreast of the manufacturers' progress, the *Item* published illustrated accounts of the planning and construction of more than forty-eight new shoe factories between March 1890 and October 1892.⁴⁵

New factory buildings erected after the fire utilized almost exclusively the modern techniques of "mill" or "slow-burning" construction. First used in the design of textile mills in Rhode Island and Lowell, Massachusetts, this method of construction met even the most stringent conditions of the 1888 fire ordinance. Moreover, the employment of nonload-bearing walls allowed for the insertion of large, closely spaced windows, meeting the industry's requirements for the provision of natural air and light. The skeleton of the factory was fabricated of heavy timber beams supported by cast-iron columns. This served as a framework for brick or masonry curtain walls pierced with regimented rows of iron-shuttered windows. To minimize the danger to the factory operatives in the event of an explosion, steam plants or "power houses" were located adjacent to the factory building or within an open interior courtyard.⁴⁶

Just as the invention of the elevator had facilitated vertical circulation throughout multistory buildings, the innovation of mill construction made possible the opening up of vast, relatively uninterrupted "loft" spaces on each level of the factory. This open plan provided for efficient horizontal circulation as well as for the maximum penetration of light and air into all parts of the factory workrooms. Moreover, because the load of the structure was carried by a skeletal framework of regularly spaced posts and beams rather than by heavy bearing walls, the interior of the factory could be easily rearranged through the installation of partitions to suit the changing spatial requirements of the building's tenants.⁴⁷

45. *Lynn Item*, March 1890 – October 1892.

46. John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, *The Architecture of America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1961), p. 107.

47. Burchard and Bush-Brown, p. 108.

The discordant jumble of the prefire streetscape was replaced by regular rows of stalwart brick factory buildings, introducing to the city a distinct harmony of proportion, scale, and design. Most were four or five stories high, with the first floor usually built “four feet off from the sidewalk to allow good light below.”⁴⁸ The street floor of each building, ornamented with cast-iron columns and decorative details, was often set aside for offices and showrooms. Those buildings constructed on corner sites were commonly distinguished by round or beveled corners to accommodate the site and, in many cases, to better articulate the entrance to the building.

Three prominent Lynn architectural firms, Wheeler and Northend, Edwin Earp, and Henry W. Rogers and Son, received most of the major factory commissions despite the many advertisements placed in the *Lynn Item* by other Essex County architects and contractors.⁴⁹ Each drew heavily from the works of the era’s most progressive architects. Consequently, most of Lynn’s new shoe factories were built in the so-called Romanesque Revival and Panel Brick styles.

Distinguished by the liberal use of arches and arcaded windows not unlike those employed in the earlier Italian-Renaissance-inspired factory buildings, the Romanesque Revival style represented a broad interpretation of the works of the Boston architect Henry Hobson Richardson. First applied to institutional and public buildings such as Trinity Church, Boston, and the Allegheny County Courthouse in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Richardson translated his distinctive architectural vocabulary into its utilitarian vernacular form in his much-emulated Marshall Field Wholesale Warehouse building, built in Chicago from 1885 to 1887. In Lynn, his designs were largely reinterpreted in brick. Only two extant buildings, the Brown Building on Union Street, designed by Edward Buss of Boston, and the Dagyr Building on Willow Street, truly convey, through their heavily rusticated stone façades, the monumental massiveness of Richardson’s own work.

The Panel Brick style reflected a more economical, utilitarian solution to the problem of factory design. Though not limited to the design of shoe factories, Louis Sullivan’s Selz, Schwab and Company shoe factory, built in Chicago in 1886, is one of the earliest and best-known pro-

48. *Lynn Item*, 15 April 1890.

49. *Lynn Item*, March 1890 – October 1892.

totypes for this style.⁵⁰ Many of the numerous Panel Brick shoe factories built in Lynn between 1890 and 1900, including the Archer Block on Washington Street and the Buffum Block on Union Street, still dominate the scene in the old manufacturing district. Tall, gently tapered brick piers articulate the sense of vertical loftiness that the designers of “tall” buildings wished to convey. Closely spaced windows, sometimes finished with arched lintels, were divided horizontally by decorated brick spandrels or “panels.” Decorative brick corbeling frequently embellished the cornice lines of these buildings as well.

The redevelopment of the shoe industry was not confined to the redefined manufacturing district. Some manufacturers, seeking direct access to rail transportation, relocated their establishments on the outskirts of the city, along the Boston and Maine Railroad line. For others, the high cost of constructing factories which would meet the requirements of the 1888 fire ordinance was prohibitive, making it necessary to rebuild outside the confines of the “fire limits.” Unlike the tall, dense brick blocks that lined the streets of the central manufacturing district, the sprawling one- and two-story warehouselike factory buildings constructed in these newly developed areas were built of wood. “Peacock” monitors (elongated dormers) lined with double-hung sash windows frequently ran the entire length of the building to provide natural light and keep the interior “perfectly well ventilated without subjecting the operatives to draughts.”⁵¹

By 1893 both the city and the shoe industry had recovered from the ravages of the fire. The population had swelled to over sixty thousand people, many of them employed by the city’s 190 shoe factories, 100 shoe machinery and “kindred establishments,” 92 cut-sole and leather-parts firms, 32 leather manufacturers.⁵² The annual production rate had stabilized at 15 million pairs of shoes, valued at more than \$12 million.⁵³

Following the postfire building boom, new construction in the central manufacturing district gradually tapered off. During the first decade of the twentieth century, however, the annual production rate of the Lynn shoe industry suddenly but briefly jumped to more than 20 million pairs of shoes, serving as a catalyst for the city’s final wave of shoe

50. Hugh Morrison, *Louis Sullivan* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1935), p. 65.

51. *Lynn Item*, 15 July 1890.

52. *Boot and Shoe Recorder*, p. 27.

53. *Boot and Shoe Recorder*, p. 27.

factory construction (fig. 8).⁵⁴ Fully cognizant of the profits to be made by the speculative building of large multitenant factories, a number of real estate trusts were formed at the turn of the century. The largest and most prolific of these ventures, the Lynn Realty Company, was organized in 1901 by Edward E. Strout, a local speculator and contractor. Between 1901 and 1910, the company built eight massive factories along Broad and Washington Streets, near Liberty Square. Designed by Henry W. Rogers, these buildings, still in use by a variety of manufacturing firms, are distinguished by their immense size and utilitarian design. The largest of these, the eight-story Vamp Building, so called because its plan recalls the shape of a shoe vamp pattern, was originally constructed in 1903 to provide more than 160,000 square feet of manufacturing space. After it was expanded in 1907, it was heralded as the largest shoe factory building in the world.

Within less than a century, the Lynn shoe industry had completed a cycle of growth, prosperity, and decay. Now only a dim and often-bitter memory to many of the townspeople, the shoe industry has, nevertheless, left its indelible visual stamp on the city. Although many shoe factories are gone, each of the remaining buildings has a story to tell, for each represents a part of a chapter in the history of the city and the industry.

54. Saville Johnson, *Lynn* (Lynn: Lynn Chamber of Commerce, 1917).

The Housing of Lynn's Shoe Workers in 1915

By NAOMI L. ROSENBLUM*

SHOE manufacturing was central New England's industrial development, and Lynn was a hub of the shoe industry in Massachusetts for more than half a century. Despite Lynn's significance, however, historians have neglected many important facets of its history. One such phase is the housing of the city's workers in 1915, the height of Lynn's reign as a shoe-manufacturing center, just as the infant electrical industry began to supplant the aging shoe industry as the dominant employer in Lynn.

Two factors critically influenced the development of workers' housing in Lynn. First, Lynn was not a company town. Unlike such textile centers as Manchester, New Hampshire, which were dominated by single giant concerns, Lynn supported more than a hundred smaller firms. Perhaps this difference reflected a greater degree of concentration of capital in the textile industry than in the shoe industry. Whatever the explanation, the fact that Lynn was not a company town meant that there was no company housing. Thus workers in Lynn did not benefit from the industrial paternalism by virtue of which workers in company towns enjoyed the relative comforts of red brick row houses and primitive forms of urban planning. Instead, most workers in Lynn lived in houses made of wood, arranged along streets laid out by happenstance and not by design.

The second factor influencing the development of workers' housing in Lynn was the density of population. Unlike such cities as Boston, which were sprouting "streetcar suburbs" at the turn of the century, Lynn developed a dense residential ring around its industrial core. Nearly all of Lynn was within a one-and-a-half-mile radius from Central Square. The city's many factories and most of her 14,000 shoe industry

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workers were jammed into this tiny area. As Lynn's population grew from 63,500 in 1900 to 103,000 in 1925, such concentration had consequences unmitigated by the efforts of company-town planners. The *City of Lynn Selected Historical Inventory* offered these striking examples:

[D]uring this period, what had been the back yard of the Anthony House at 166 Washington Street became Quincy Terrace with its closely-built "three-deckers", the small courts off Essex Street became nearly solid with apartment houses and many houses on Washington Street were either moved to the rear of their lots to make way for apartments or were demolished.¹

Corroborating the *Inventory* is the rapid increase in applications for building permits within Lynn during this period. The number of such applications was 90 in 1900, 224 in 1905, 295 in 1911, 224 in 1915, and 18 in 1920. Between 1900 and 1925, 4,251 dwellings were built in Lynn.²

That Lynn's population expanded inward rather than outward is a phenomenon which is difficult to explain. Lynn's population did grow in such a manner, however, contradicting assertions by some historians that much of Lynn's population commuted from neighboring towns. Although three train lines served Lynn from six stations, and several trolley lines operated within Lynn, less than two percent of Lynn's shoe industry workers were commuters.³ Approximately sixty-five percent considered Lynn their home, and approximately thirty percent were roomers and boarders.

Housing in Lynn consisted of single-family houses, triple-deckers, apartment buildings, and rooming houses. Of those workers who considered themselves permanent residents of Lynn, eighteen percent owned the houses in which they lived. Most owner-occupied houses were single-family houses; only a few were triple-deckers. Apartment buildings were used by only three percent of Lynn's shoe-working population; thus, it is no surprise that only twenty-four apartment buildings had been built by 1915.

1. *City of Lynn Selected Historical Inventory* (Lynn: Department of Community Development, 1977), p. 9.

2. *Applications for Permits to Build, 1900-1925, and Annual Reports of the Inspector of Buildings, 1900-1915* (Lynn: Building Department of the City of Lynn).

3. All the statistics, unless otherwise noted, are from a ten percent sampling of people who could be positively identified as shoe factory workers from their job descriptions in the 1915 *Lynn City Directory*.

It is impossible to say how many workers lived in single-family houses in 1915. Single-family houses were built in Lynn as early as 1630 and continued to be built throughout the nineteenth century, and it is known that workers lived in many of the single-family homes scattered throughout Lynn. The precise number of workers who inhabited them is unavailable, however, nor have any plans of a typical worker's single-family home yet been discovered. But it is known that many of the larger single-family houses were converted into two-family dwellings, and some even into three-family dwellings. As might be expected, those families who owned their homes lived in single-family rather than two-family or three-family homes. These houses generally had five or more rooms, and no one type of worker inhabited them in greater proportion than any other type of worker—from shoemaker to foreman.

The triple-decker, an architectural phenomenon of the working-class areas around Boston, was (and is) used widely in Lynn. A compromise between an apartment building and a single-family dwelling, the triple-decker is a mix between urban and suburban housing. It is a building type which provides housing for three families in a space previously used for one family. Its basic architectural characteristic is its wood-frame construction. Its "functional origin . . . lies in the principle of multi-family housing." As Arthur Krim observes:

The back porches are the true architectural innovation of the three-decker, for it is they that give it the distinctive character of a "porch house." The rear decks developed when the rowhouse [from which the three-decker is derived] was divided into three-family units, one on each floor.⁴

Another fairly universal characteristic of the three-decker is its three-story bay on one side of its entry porch.

In his study of the Dorchester three-deckers, Arthur Krim states that there are two types of these buildings—a flat-roofed and urban version with a two-story front porch (which came out of South Boston) and a gable- or hip-roofed, more rural version, with a three-story front porch (which came out of Roxbury).⁵ The type of three-deckers found in Lynn are the flat-roofed version, and their porches are either one story

4. Arthur Krim, *The Three Deckers of Dorchester: An Architectural Historical Survey* (Boston: Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1977), pp. vi, viii.

5. Krim, p. vii.

or three stories high. Although numerous three-deckers are still standing, it is difficult to say how many were built—probably an approximate figure is 1,500. In several areas three-deckers are the dominant architectural form, creating what Krim calls “a hypnotic rhythm of repeated forms.”⁶

The basic plan (fig. 9) of a triple-decker is relatively simple: three identical floors, one family per floor. The number of rooms per floor in each building varies from three to seven. Each floor has a rear deck and often also has a front piazza. The kitchen, the center of all home life, is always situated near the back porch so that the icebox can be placed away from the stove, in a cool area. There is always a front room or parlor—often with a bay window—which is usually reserved for special occasions or special company.

The plan of each apartment in a triple-decker looks fairly large and airy. However, the dwellings were often built very close to each other, so that most of the light and air came from the front and back rather than from the side windows. Double triple-deckers, or housing for six families, were also built in Lynn. Airshafts were placed in the middle of these double buildings to make up for the loss of light and air (fig. 10).

Although many three-deckers were built in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Boston, very few were built in Lynn at that time. Between 1891 and 1899 (comprehensive building records were begun in 1891), only eighty-four triple-deckers were built in Lynn.⁷ The surge in three-family houses began in about 1902 and continued until World War I, when all housing construction ebbed (fig. 11).

Four Lynn architects figure most prominently in the design of the triple-deckers: H. W. Rogers; Dana A. Sanborn; M. F. Burke; and Edwin Earp & Son. The buildings were rarely owner-occupied. Assessed at approximately \$4,000, they were too expensive for most shoe industry workers to own; foremen and shoecutters were more able to afford them. The vast majority of triple-decker apartments were rented to the occupants by the owner of the building. Certain small streets devoted entirely to triple-deckers were developed by one individual.⁸ A cursory

6. Krim, p. iii.

7. *Applications for Permits to Build, 1891–1899.*

8. For example, Ashton Terrace, with its five triple-deckers, was owned by Lawrence Litch in 1914.

DWELLINGS BUILT IN LYNN 1891 TO 1925

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Number of Dwellings Built</i>	<i>Number of Triple-deckers Built</i>
1891	434	13
1892	562	17
1893	377	16
1894	216	2
1895	204	8
1896	144	7
1897	120	5
1898	59	6
1899	108	10
1900	90	17
1901	101	28
1902	111	39
1903	129	41
1904	143	49
1905	224	111
1906	257	134
1907	256	114
1908	177	63
1909	277	103
1910	255	111
1911	295	103
1912	292	114
1913	193	30
1914	152	11
1915	224	27
1916	141	12
1917	47	1
1918	7	0
1919	59	0
1920	18	0
1921	78	0
1922	117	1
1923	151	4
1924	153	10
1925	304	11

Fig. 11. Table of dwellings built in Lynn between 1891 and 1925.

survey of available records has not as yet determined whether a few people acted as speculators and developers of most of the triple-deckers or whether there were numerous owners.

Unlike triple-deckers, apartment buildings were a twentieth-century phenomenon and quickly gained popularity in Lynn. Although some apartment buildings were built as early as 1909, the first mention of them—as apartment hotels—in the *Lynn City Directory* was made in 1914, when thirty-two were listed. In 1925, sixty-one were listed. From the outside, many of these early apartment buildings look like large and deep double triple-deckers, some built of wood and others of brick. The number of apartments—or suites, the contemporary term—in each building varies. As in the triple-deckers, each floor within an apartment building tended to be the same. The suites were usually small, consisting of three or four rooms including the kitchen. A random sampling of the records shows that in 1915 slightly more than two percent of the shoe factory workers lived in apartment buildings.

Figure 12 shows a floor plan for 172 Washington Street, an apartment building built in 1909. It has a wood façade and is still inhabited. The sizes of the rooms of the apartment building are similar to those of the triple-decker, except for the size of the kitchen. The kitchen in the apartment building is a small fraction of the size of the kitchen in the triple-decker, indicating that the socializing that took place in the kitchen of the single-family house and the triple-decker had to occur in another room of the apartment building. Bay windows continued to be used to enhance room size and to increase the amount of natural light coming into the room.

Apartment buildings were not owner-occupied. The occupants rented their apartments and were usually married couples, sometimes with families. Occasionally a single person lived in an apartment.

Apartment buildings in 1915 were located in three areas. The first, which was the closest to the industrial center and thus the densest, was south of Central Square around Newhall Street (fig. 13). Six apartment buildings were on Newhall Street, three were on West Baltimore Street (just off Newhall Street), and two others were about a quarter of a mile east of Newhall Street. Northwest of Central Square, on and around Washington Street, were four other apartment buildings. Another building stands west of Washington Street on Western Avenue. The third location for the twenty-four apartment buildings listed in the *Directory*

was in West Lynn—one on Market Square, and the other south of Market Square on Summer Street.

In 1913 an attempt was made to create zoning regulations which would forbid the building of apartment buildings south of Broad Street. In July 1913 the *Lynn Daily Evening Item* carried a series of articles concerning this early attempt at zoning in Lynn.

On 11 July 1913 the paper reported that residents of the area south of Broad Street to the waterfront, "Lynn's finest residential district, . . . petitioned the Municipal Council . . . for an ordinance restricting three-tenement houses from an area extending from Broad and Lewis streets to the waterfront. They cited as reasons for their request the lessening of fire hazard."⁹ This petition was referred to the Committee of Ordinances, which was chaired by Frank Turnbull. "Commissioner Turnbull said that he understood the true object of the ordinance to be the exclusion of the larger type apartment houses to prevent depreciation of adjoining property, which, he said, he considered a good business proposition for the city, since the city would like to see valuations remain high for the sake of the tax that could be derived."¹⁰ A second and similar petition was filed a few days later.

In between the first petition and the hearing that was scheduled for 22 July 1913 to discuss the proposed ordinance, several plans for apartment buildings were submitted to the Buildings Department. The architect for one of these apartment buildings, curiously enough, was H. W. Rogers—one of the signers of the second petition.

The Daily Evening Item, on the date of the ordinance hearing, 22 July 1913, proclaimed: "ANIMATED HEARING ON APARTMENT HOUSES."¹¹ Those opposed to the proposed zoning called the ordinance "class legislation." Those in favor of the petition believed that "such houses as were proposed would bring in undesirable citizens." To this the objection was raised that "'the people who have signed that petition have already built a Chinese wall through Lynn . . . and now they wish to build around themselves allowing undesirables like me from the Highlands to peek over occasionally and gaze upon the Lord's anoin-

9. "Exclude Three-Deckers from Residential Area," *Lynn Daily Evening Item*, 11 July 1913, p. 1 (hereafter referred to as *Lynn Item*).

10. *Lynn Item*, 11 July 1913, p. 11.

11. "Animated Hearing on Apartment Houses," *Lynn Item*, 22 July 1913, p. 1.

ted.’”¹² After both sides were heard, the hearing was closed, with no decision having been announced. The proposed building ordinance was never passed, and apartment buildings were built on the site by 1915.

The transient population of Lynn included lodgers and boarders, who made up about thirty percent of the random sampling. Eleven percent of those in the sampling lived in rooming or boarding houses, while the other nineteen percent lived in other people’s homes. In Lynn, “the number of boarding houses jumped from 192 to 226” between the years 1908 and 1924.¹³ Most of the boarding and lodging houses were located within a one-half-mile radius of Central Square, in the center of the city (see fig. 13).

Many of the boarding and lodging houses were actually built for that purpose and were not converted from buildings built for other uses (fig. 14). Rooms off of hallways, with communal bath and toilet facilities, were let to lodgers. Obtaining meals outside of one’s living quarters was easy in Lynn; there were many eating houses and lunch rooms which catered especially to the shoe factory workers. Some women also served meals in their homes to customers in order to supplement the family’s income. Most of the inhabitants of boarding and lodging houses were individuals, sometimes with siblings, and a vast majority of them had no other relatives in Lynn.¹⁴ In addition, a few married couples resided in the lodging and boarding houses.

Very few of the individuals listed in the 1915 *Directory* as living in lodging houses were listed in Lynn in 1910 and 1920. Most of those listed in the 1915 *Directory* who were also listed in 1910 or 1920 either stayed at their 1915 addresses or moved to other locations where they were again classified as roomers or boarders.

Families who lived in a house—usually a single-family home—and who had an extra room often took in roomers or boarders for extra income. At times, even without a spare room, the female head of the household would crowd her own family’s quarters to take in roomers, to increase the family’s income. A 1909 study of immigrants in various

12. *Lynn Item*, 22 July 1913, p. 1. This statement was made by Walter W. Pyne, an attorney.

13. John T. Cumbler, “Continuity and Disruption: Working-Class Community in Lynn and Fall River, Massachusetts, 1880–1950,” unpublished diss., University of Michigan, 1974, p. 30. (See Martin Blatt’s article, p. 53, fn. 4.)

14. Individuals with families in Lynn tended to stay with their families until becoming married or moving out of Lynn.

industries included a section of the Lynn shoemaking industry and showed that it was a widespread policy among immigrants to take in roomers:

Although a considerable proportion of the wives in the families, the heads of which were connected with the shoe industry, as well as other female members of the families, seek regular employment outside the homes as a means of contributing to the family support, a much larger proportion of the wives add to the earnings of their husbands by taking boarders or lodgers in the home.¹⁵

Of the 463 households listed in the 1909 report, one-third had boarders or lodgers:

Households the heads of which are of foreign birth show a considerably higher percentage of keeping boarders or lodgers than either the households the heads of which are native-born of foreign father or households the heads of which are native-born of native father, which follow in the order named. Among households the heads of which are foreign-born those whose heads are Lithuanians show 93.8 per cent and households the heads of which are Poles 86.2 per cent keeping boarders or lodgers. . . . Households the heads of which are Armenians or English show only 14.4 per cent and 13.8 per cent, respectively, keeping boarders or lodgers.¹⁶

Surprisingly, there are very few records of contemporary housing conditions. What little has been written about that period comes from several sources: Board of Health *Annual Reports*, the Immigration Commission survey already quoted, and a report of the shoe industry as a vocation for women.

The Board of Health, in its *Annual Reports*, always had a chart of sanitary conditions which listed the number of estates in good or fair condition, listed those with full or offensive privy vaults, dirty water closets or urinals, and occasionally listed dirty tenements. During the years 1900 to 1915, the number of the estates inspected that were found

15. *Immigrants in Industry*, vol. 74 (Washington: U. S. Senate Immigration Commission, 1911), p. 389.

16. *Immigrants in Industry*, pp. 406-07.

in good or fair condition was always higher than 10,000. The number of estates inspected and found to be unsanitary was not higher than 774 and went as low as 188. The locations and types of housing inspected are never mentioned.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report entitled *The Boot and Shoe Industry in Massachusetts as a Vocation for Women* states that the light furnished in lodging houses was wretched.¹⁷ The Board of Health, in its 1914 *Annual Report*, probably gave an accurate account of lodging houses, and points out the problems of closing them:

Lodging houses are receiving closer inspection. This department has about completed its inspection of lodging houses, many of which were found in a condition that will require considerable renovation to make them satisfactory. Those that are occupied as cheap lodging houses present a problem difficult of solution, inasmuch as they offer no bathing facilities and are not always kept in the most cleanly condition. To close them, however, especially during the winter would turn into the streets many men who for the small sum of 10 cents or 15 cents are now privileged to sleep indoors. It would be an immense benefit to the community if a cheap lodging house could be established where men and women who [sic] for a nominal sum might be afforded lodgings under cleaner conditions with bathing facilities provided.¹⁸

Only one source discusses congestion in Lynn's housing, the Immigration Commission report:

[T]he average number of persons per sleeping room is 2. The household whose heads are foreign-born show an average of 2.10 persons per sleeping room, the households whose heads are native-born of foreign father show 1.88, and households the heads of which are native whites born of native father show an average of 1.61 persons per sleeping room. Households the heads of which are Lithuanians show 2.43 persons per sleeping room, which is the highest average shown for any race, while those whose heads are Irish show the lowest average number of persons per sleeping room, or 1.53.¹⁹

17. *The Boot and Shoe Industry in Massachusetts as a Vocation for Women*, Bulletin No. 180 (Washington: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1915), pp. 15-16.

18. *Annual Report of the Board of Health*, City of Lynn, 1914, p. 246.

19. *Immigrants in Industry*, p. 413.

The problems of congestion and lack of sanitation were noted by official agencies but there is little documentation of corrective measures taken to remedy the situation. Eventually matters changed, and the quality of living improved generally as buildings were remodeled to meet more modern standards.

The facts drawn from the records of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Immigration Commission, the Lynn Building Department, the Lynn Board of Health, and the other sources noted here do not give a complete or detailed account of housing or living conditions in 1915. Nevertheless, they do at least present a picture of the domestic and residential life of the workers of Lynn during the era when the shoe industry in that city had reached its peak.

Accommodation and Conflict: Shoe Workers in Twentieth-Century Lynn

By JOHN T. CUMBLER*

IN the late nineteenth century American labor was recovering from a series of major defeats—the loss of the Homestead strike of 1892 and the destruction of the Amalgamated Iron and Steel Workers Union, the loss of the Pullman strike and the destruction of the American Railway Union, the loss of the Knights of Labor strike against Jay Gould's Southwest Railway system, and, most dramatically, the disastrous debacle of the Haymarket Riot, which not only brought defeat to the eight-hour-day struggle in 1886, but, more important, brought the full weight of the government down on organized labor. The Knights of Labor went into a precipitous decline, and at the local level labor experienced a series of defeats.¹

In the face of these defeats and the loss of membership in a large number of unions, labor leaders began to cast about for strategies which would protect the organizations that still existed and at the same time would provide a basis for future growth without eliciting violent response from business and state government. Within that context, some labor organizations looked to a policy of accommodation with capital and hoped that, by working out an arrangement through which both labor and capital could stabilize, formal labor organizations could then

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1. See John T. Cumbler's *Working Class Community in Industrial America: Work, Leisure, and Struggle in Two Industrial Cities, 1880-1930* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979) for a discussion of the loss of local strikes in Lynn, Massachusetts, as well as in Fall River, Massachusetts. See particularly the loss of the Leather Workers, Knights of Labor strike of 1890, pp. 71-81. The author would like to thank Charles Stephenson for his comments on an earlier version of this paper.

build themselves up into a position where they could make demands on capital in the interests of their members.

Such a policy of accommodation came to typify the position of Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor. It was a policy which led leaders of the American Federation of Labor into an alliance with liberal business interests within the National Civic Federation, whose members besides the nation's leading liberal intellectual and business elites also included Samuel Gompers, John Mitchell of the United Mine Workers, John Golden of the United Textile Workers, and John Tobin, a member of the N.C.F. executive committee and the president of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union.²

It was this policy of accommodation which led labor historians, particularly of the Perlman-Commons school, to characterize the American labor movement as bread-and-butter unionism. Yet the decision to move to bread-and-butter unionism was not an unqualified shift, nor did it characterize the whole of the American labor movement. There were significant reasons why many of the leaders of the American Federation of Labor opted for cooperation with capital. There was also substantial opposition to that strategy at several levels within organized labor, besides those manifested by the more radical I.W.W.

The leaders of many of the nation's trade unions, in the face of repression and loss of membership, looked for a mechanism which would protect their organizations and at the same time give labor, or at least a sector of labor, a voice in the American system. When it took the accommodationist approach, organized labor was confronted with the issue of the inherent tension between the interests of the working class, which arose from the conditions of labor, and the interests of the institutions of the working class (i.e., unions), which represented the interests of labor. Unions had to survive in order to function, yet at times survival involved an accommodation with capital which brought into question the very validity of the organization itself.

The Boot and Shoe Workers Union's struggles in Lynn in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century illustrate this conflict and tension. The union was born out of local frustration with the Knights of Labor's inability to confront the industrial organization within the shoe

2. See James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State, 1900-1918* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), for a discussion of the "National Civic Federation and the Role of Labor Figures in That Organization."

trade. Yet the attempt of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union to survive within the context of capital's hostility and repression gave rise to conflict between the rank and file and the union leadership. That conflict as it was worked out on the local and community level gives the historian an excellent view of the process of accommodation and its opposition. It illustrates the diversity of labor's response and the lack of consensus over the bread-and-butter strategy.

The Lynn shoe workers of the late 1880s and early 1890s were leaders in a movement out of the Knights of Labor into a new national union of shoe workers affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.³ In 1895 the new union affiliated with three other independent shoe workers' unions to become the Boot and Shoe Workers Union. The new Boot and Shoe Workers Union claimed that the organization of the shoe industry demanded an industrial union nationally organized.⁴ The leadership of the new union committed itself to militant unionism and socialism.⁵ Lynn not only supplied many of the members of the union, it also supplied a majority of the leaders. Indeed, Horace Eaton of the Lynn Lasters Union was the general secretary of the new organization. In harmony with its concern for militant unionism, the new organization committed the union to a fight for the eight-hour day, and for equality of women workers.

The Lynn Lasters were particularly anxious about the weakness of the local union movement in dealing with mechanization. The local lasters were struggling to maintain control over lasting (the process of attaching the upper part of the shoe to the sole), while the companies were introducing an automatic laster which could do the work traditionally done by hand. The hand lasters accepted wage cuts in order to slow the pace of the introduction of the lasting machine while the union was desperately trying to use its leverage over hand lasting to demand that the companies hire only union members to work the machine.⁶ The lasters

3. James Morris, "The Cincinnati Shoemakers' Lockout of 1888," *Labor History* 13 (1972): 505-19, and *Working Class Community*, pp. 81, 82.

4. *Lest We Forget*, pamphlet of the United Shoe Workers Union (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1913).

5. John Laslett, *Labor and the Left: A Study of Socialist and Radical Influence in the American Labor Movement 1881-1924* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), pp. 57, 61, 64.

6. "Minutes of Lynn Lasters Union," 19, 21, 24 January 1897; 26 January 1898; 23 August 1899, Lynn Lasters Union Papers, Baker Library, Harvard University.

believed that the success of the strategy required a strong national union which would pursue a similar strategy in other regions.⁷

Although there was significant support in Lynn for the new Boot and Shoe Workers Union, not all of Lynn shoe workers left the Knights of Labor for the new union. The local Knights of Labor inherited from the old Knights of St. Crispin a tradition of social and union activity and a union militance. When the local stitchers and lasters and others in the shoe trade went into the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, local Knights who remained within the K of L did not feel that this was a repudiation of their activities or represented a negative evaluation of the local Knights' experience in Lynn. The Lynn shoe cutters remained within the Knights of Labor, but worked with the local Boot and Shoe Workers Union. This was not surprising, since Lynn had a long tradition of interorganizational and interunion cooperation.⁸

In 1900 the Lynn shoe cutters, Assembly No. 3662 of the Knights of Labor, worked out an agreement with the Boot and Shoe Cutters Union dealing with the use of the B&SWU's union stamp in factories and the conflict of jurisdiction between the two unions.⁹ The B&SWU could organize new cutters into mixed Boot and Shoe Workers Union locals, and there would be arbitration of grievances between the two unions. Jurisdiction over the cutters in the union stamp factories in Lynn was to switch to the Boot and Shoe Workers Union when more than 250 cutters were employed in union stamp factories.

In 1903 two nonunion stamp factories in Lynn applied for the union stamp. Both factories had previously had Knights of Labor cutters. According to the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, when the two factories applied for the union stamp, the Knights of Labor cutters should have switched over to the Boot and Shoe Workers Union. The Knights demanded that the factories refuse the union stamp and that they employ

7. See Irwin Yellowitz, "Skilled Workers and Mechanization: The Lasters in the 1890's," *Labor History* 18(1977), for a discussion of the lasters' response to mechanization. Although Yellowitz is correct in noting the importance of this issue in the formation of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, the Lynn locals' hostility to the union did not originate in a rejection of the strategy towards mechanization.

8. 1905 *Annual Report*, Knights of Labor, Cutters Assembly No. 3662. See also Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 173-93, for a discussion of the cooperation and community interaction between the various unions in Lynn.

9. *Proceedings of the Sixth Convention of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union* (Cincinnati: 1904), pp. 9, 24, 25 (hereafter listed as *Sixth Proceedings*).

only Knights of Labor cutters. They accused the B&SWU officers of misusing union funds and failing to act in the interests of labor. In response to the manufacturers' refusal to give them exclusive recognition, the Knights struck.

The strike caught the Boot and Shoe Workers Union off guard. The B&SWU assumed that the strike would be short-lived and of little significance. Its membership in Lynn had been growing significantly since the mid-1890s and the union saw no reason why the local community would not rally to its side. As the Boot and Shoe Workers Union saw the issue, it was a question of the integrity of their contract with the manufacturers. They felt they were obliged to honor that contract even if it meant bringing in other workers to fill the places of the striking Knights of Labor cutters. The strike was neither short-lived nor unimportant. The community of Lynn rallied around the Knights and abandoned the B&SWU. As the leader of the B&SWU put it, "because of political and selfish reasons, we were denied the lawful support of the authorities and the moral support of the newspapers. . . . If an officer happened around at all during an assault on our members, our members were invariably arrested. . . . Lodging housekeepers who were intimidated would not house our members."¹⁰

By the end of the strike the Boot and Shoe Workers Union had lost the women stitchers to the Knights of Labor as well as most of their support in the city. Shortly afterwards, Lynn became the center for radical independent unions such as the United Shoe Workers, the Allied Shoe Workers, the Amalgamated Shoe Workers of America, and National Shoe Workers of America. Historians have seen the issue as one of localism against nationalism, or have argued the conflict had its origins in the failure of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union to prevent mechanization from encroaching upon hand work.¹¹ Although there is an element of truth in both these analyses, there was a much more fundamental reason for the conflict in Lynn, and that reason involves the conflict within the American labor movement between the interests of the working class and the interests of the institutions of the working class (i.e., the union).

The conflict in Lynn had its origins much earlier in the slow changes that were occurring within the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, origi-

10. *Sixth Proceedings*, p. 25.

11. See Irwin Yellowitz, "Skilled Workers and Mechanization. . .," and John Laslett, *Labor and the Left*. . . .

nally founded on the ideas of "quasi-industrial unionism." The union had a low dues scale which was designed to encourage mass membership and allow unskilled workers to participate. It encouraged local strikes for better pay and job conditions. The original constitution created a decentralized and highly democratic union.¹² With decentralization and democratic control, local unions would be able to maintain militance with national support without worrying about interference from the national leadership.

The decentralized control also was a natural outgrowth of the traditions in Lynn from which many of the national leaders came. Lynn shoe workers had a tradition of democratic control which went back to the early years of the Knights of St. Crispin. Although by the end of the nineteenth century it had been a half century since Lynn workers had direct control over the process of work in the small ten-footers where journeymen and master workmen worked side by side in the total production of the shoe, the memory of that experience was kept alive by the folk culture of the city's shoe workers. With the loss of the great strike of 1860 and the introduction first of manufacturing capitalism and finally industrial capitalism with its machines and finite divisions of labor, Lynn shoe workers kept alive their traditions of militance and independence through institutions which evolved from the culture of the artisans.

Culture is a normative system. It dictates the "oughts," the values and norms of society. People adapt to new behavior only reluctantly. If that new behavior is in conflict with the values, traditions, and institutions of the culture they came from, they are likely to resist. In a new environment, resistance is likely to be expressed in institutions which, although adapted to the new environment, are also independent and in opposition. Lynn shoe workers faced such a conflict with the emergence of the new industrial factory system in the second half of the nineteenth century. They responded to that system not only with resistance, as in the strike of 1860, but also with institutional forms which gave expression to their traditional cultural values of independence and equality yet functioned within the new environment.

12. The founders of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union felt that such a structure would avoid the problems that confronted the Knights of Labor shoe workers in Cincinnati where the national leadership of the Knights forced the local workers to accept an agreement which they felt sold them out. See James Morris, "The Cincinnati Shoemakers' Lockout of 1888," *Labor History* 13 (1972):505-19, for a discussion of that strike.

These institutions (whether they were regular gatherings in Hunt's Café, known as "Crispin's Congress," where affairs of the trade, conditions of work, and grievances against employers were discussed and the dignity and importance of the workers based upon a labor theory of value were maintained, or in more formal settings such as the halls of the early Knights of St. Crispin or Knights of Labor) were important centers for the expression of the independence of the worker. They were also arenas where the traditional values of independence and equality were translated into democratic and militant unionism. That militance and democracy also demanded a unionism which sought control over the workplace and worker involvement, control central to the workers' sense of dignity and independence. Admittedly that independence was a far cry from the artisans in the ten-footer, yet it was an adaption of the cultural values which grew out of that tradition. The tradition of democratic unionism and control was kept alive in the Knights of Labor and later in the Lasters Protective Union, the leading force behind the B&SWU. At well-attended meetings strikes were decided by group vote, and local grievances were commonly discussed. Rank and file members decided on what actions should be taken, and the officers were instructed to carry out the wishes of the membership.¹³

These Lynn activists, when they went into the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, tried to replicate their local democracy on the national level. They wanted to insure, by decentralizing the structure of the B&SWU, that local conditions, particularly shop floor conditions, would be given serious consideration.

Unfortunately for the organization, its militance brought a series of disastrous strikes (which strained the limited union treasury) and almost crippled the union. These setbacks led the national leadership, particularly Tobin and Easton, to tighten their control of the union and to shore up its weakened financial position through a revised constitution of 1899.¹⁴ The new constitution, which generated much internal conflict and dissension, replaced the old militance and low dues with a

13. See *Working Class Community* for a discussion of the role of the union and its decentralized democratic process. See also the "Minutes of the Lynn Lasters Union" where the process of grievance and strikes were illustrated in the weekly meetings, and Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn*, and *Working Class Community*, for a discussion of the traditions of Lynn shoe workers and their evolution from the earlier artisan community.

14. *Seventh Proceedings* (Milwaukee, 1906), p. 18.

highly structured, centralized, high-dues (from 10¢ to 25¢ per week), and high-benefit organization.¹⁵ As one historian characterized the switch, “the leadership in the B&SWU came around to the concept that an economic organization based upon high dues and payment of sick, death and strike assistance would produce much better results for its members than a union whose only source of solidarity [was] the class conscious sympathy of its workers one for another.”¹⁶

But the switch from low dues to high signified severe major shifts. It had not only meant the abandonment of the more decentralized and democratic structure, but it also had the effect of discouraging unskilled workers, particularly immigrants, from membership. The low-dues system both encouraged unskilled workers to join and allowed for easy entrance into the union of new members of the work force. The new benefit system reoriented the focus of the union from militant job-control, job-action unionism to the more conservative benefits- and protection-oriented unionism which became the hallmark of the American Federation of Labor Unions.¹⁷

There was considerable dissatisfaction with the new constitution, especially among the more militant locals. But that dissatisfaction did not produce a substantial opposition on their part. The national leaders, who were proposing the changes, all had solid credentials as militants. Few rank-and-file members were able to fight the national leadership on the new constitution. Although there was dissent, there was not enough to overcome the union’s focal concern over its falling financial status and weak condition.¹⁸

The leaders of the Boot and Shoe Workers were working from a coherent and logical analysis. Convinced that the union’s interests as an institution were in fact identical to the interests of the workers, they took the position that it was better to have a conservative institution which compromised on major issues than to have no institution at all. Concern for the survival of the union became paramount in their thinking.

Within a few years it became clear that the program adopted by the

15. *Seventh Proceedings*. See also Horace B. Davis, *Shoes: The Workers and the Industry* (New York: International Publications, 1940), p. 168.

16. Laslett, *Labor and the Left*, p. 71. See also Davis, *Shoes*, p. 168.

17. It is hard to tell if the shift dues and benefits actually moved the union away from a commitment to unskilled workers and militant job action, but it was seen this way by both sides in the debate.

18. *Sixth Proceedings*, pp. 8–12.

national leadership involved much more than purely dues and benefits. With the new constitution, the union also became increasingly concerned over contracts. The union adopted as an organizing principle not a struggle between capital and labor, but accommodation with capital. The union went out to sell itself not to the workers but to management. The union officials offered the manufacturers a union stamp which would be stamped on the shoes produced in factories with a union contract. The union, in turn, promised to advertise the stamp on a national scale (fig. 15). The manufacturer could then utilize the union stamp as a means of selling its product. The union also promised to provide binding arbitration for all grievances, to stay away from job control, to avoid strikes, and to maintain labor peace. In return for the union stamp, the manufacturers would promise a closed shop (thus, more union members) and to arbitrate grievances. The union offered the members not only the benefits of organization but sickness and death benefits as well. The union stamp was not a guarantee of either higher wages or better conditions, for the union explicitly left those decisions in the hands of management.¹⁹ The union also agreed not to interfere with hiring and firing processes. As the general secretary of the union stated in 1911, "The union stamp, in my opinion, was never intended to stand for wages or conditions, and I hope and trust it never will."²⁰ Under the new constitution, no local could call a strike without the support of the national. No strikes could be called against contracts. Since the officials of the union felt that local leaders and the rank and file were more radical than the national leadership and would jeopardize the new strategy, the national leadership was given the administrative and practical power of the union.²¹ In order to sell the union to the manufacturers, the national officials were anxious to stop "the aggressive strikes that have taken place in [the shoe] trade [which] were due largely to impulse of the rank and file which was in control. . . ."²² They did so through the highly centralized structure of the new constitution.²³

19. *Seventh Proceedings*, pp. 20, 102. Tobin actually stated that union policy is to (the employers') interest as well as the shoe workers' interests. He also noted that the new policy was explicitly "conciliation."

20. Davis, *Shoes*, p. 168.

21. Thomas Norton, *Trade Union Policies in the Massachusetts Shoe Industry, 1919-1929* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), pp. 115-19.

22. "Testimony of Horace Eaton," *Industrial Commission*, vol. 8, p. 351.

23. "Testimony. . . ." See also *Sixth Proceedings*, pp. 8, 9, and *Proceedings, Eighth Convention* (Toronto, 1907), p. 18.

At the 1904 convention of the Boot and Shoe Workers, the union stamp issue took up three times as much space in President Tobin's report as wages, strikes, or conditions disputes.²⁴ In listing the major issues of labor, Tobin argued that "organization is our first . . . duty, advertising the union stamp is the second and essential to the organization. Third, is education upon the principles of the organization, fourth is loyalty to the constitution and contracts, both nationally and locally, and fifth is attention to improving wages and conditions."²⁵ Tobin also made the point that a general advance in wages would have to wait for the complete organization of the trade, but the low priority of conditions and wages on his lists suggests a heightened concern over the structure and the organizational phase of the union. Tobin went on to argue that the job of a union organizer was to "advertise the union stamp." He chastised the membership for diverting the organizers into dealing with union grievances.

Believing that the defense and growth of the organization was of paramount importance to the working class, Tobin's position made sense. "Shoe manufacturers absolutely will not take the union stamp if forced to increase wages, to refuse to issue the union stamp under any other conditions is simply cutting off our organization from its greatest opportunity to expand. We should work along the lines of least resistance and not greatest resistance."²⁶

Tobin's position allowed the organization to grow, but it grew within the parameters defined by labor's opponents: the manufacturers. The new position not only expressed itself in policy but in the very language of the organization. Rather than viewing a trade union as resting upon the support and solidarity of the members, Tobin argued that contracts were "the very foundation on which the organization [was] built" and he argued that "if trade unions are to continue as business organizations, their greatest asset is an honest and honored agreement."²⁷

The new constitution of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union reflected the shift in attitudes and direction of the leadership not only concerning the union, but also its role in the labor community. "Trade unions have evolved into business institutions. . . . Their permanency as business in-

24. *Sixth Proceedings*, pp. 8-32.

25. *Sixth Proceedings*, p. 32.

26. *Sixth Proceedings*, p. 28.

27. *Sixth Proceedings*, pp. 24-26.

stitutions largely depends upon preservation of their contracts.” “However justified may be their organized struggle, if that struggle is to be associated with broken contracts and incur the reputation of dishonorable business practices, trade unions are doomed to failure. Unbusinesslike practices beget distrust and eventually unsolvency.”²⁸

The leaders of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, shattered by their early experience with lost strikes, shifted their focus from the protection of workers to the protection of the union. In doing so, they lost much of their earlier working-class support.²⁹ The obsession with the survival of the organization led to a dichotomy between the leadership and the rank and file. “Let us be sensible of the fact that the disruption of every union that has passed into oblivion was hastened by the radicals who always work impatient under the slow, steady measured tread of permanent success.”³⁰ “Success,” when linked with permanence and concern over those unions which passed into oblivion, meant the stability and permanence of the organization of the working class, not the more abstract conception of the interests of the working class which went on with or without a particular organization.³¹ Thus, for the sake of the union and its growth, which came to be of paramount concern for the leadership of the B&SWU, the contract had to be defended at all costs. “We must under all circumstances protect our contracts.”³² To do otherwise was to undermine the new strategy of accommodation and conciliation with management.

Lynn workers had a long tradition not only of militance, but of concern over working conditions. Job-condition issues dominated the minutes of the Lynn unions.³³ Lynn workers were well aware that the conflict between labor and capital was not a sporadic event or an abstraction, but a constant struggle which went on perpetually over the work benches of hundreds of shoe workers in Lynn. For the workers, organizations were the weapons in that constant war, and strikes and wages

28. *Sixth Proceedings*, p. 25.

29. Davis, *Shoes*, p. 166; *Sixth Proceedings*, pp. 25, 27, 37.

30. *Sixth Proceedings*, p. 35.

31. Tobin and the leadership argued for penalties for wildcat strikers, in order to maintain “a high standard for business integrity.” Such a policy would control the “radical and unreasoning members of our known organization [who are] dangerous.” *Seventh Proceedings*, p. 20; *Sixth Proceedings*, p. 8.

32. *Sixth Proceedings*, p. 9.

33. “Minutes of Lynn Lasters Union,” 1897, 1898, 1899.

conflicts were but manifestations of that inherent conflict between the "boss" and the employee. When the Lynn workers left the Knights of Labor for the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, it was because they felt that the B&SWU could offer them a more efficient and powerful weapon in their conflict with management. They stayed with the B&SWU despite the new constitution, because they viewed the union as an instrument for their interests and for their control. By 1903 it was clear that the new direction of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union was less and less in harmony with the interests of the Lynn workers.

Although the shoe cutters had remained outside the B&SWU locals, response to the cutters' strike indicated the hostility of Lynn workers to the new direction of the Boot and Shoe Workers' leadership.³⁴ Initially, when the Knights of Labor went out on strike in 1903, there was little interest, especially since strikes were hardly a new phenomenon in Lynn. But as the B&SWU began to "honor its contracts," the local community rebelled against the union itself.³⁵ The B&SWU brought in union members from their other areas to scab against the striking K of L. The rebellion against the B&SWU was not just against the idea of strikebreakers, but also against the increasingly conservative policy of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union leadership. The Knights of Labor, Assembly No. 3662, cutters, represented only 200 cutters in the city, but soon they were joined by other shoe workers. The women stitchers left the B&SWU, which soon had to replace not only cutters, but stitchers. The B&SWU needed a police escort to protect its members and had to house and to feed the new workers as well.

Many local AF of L unions supported the K of L over the AF of L which was affiliated with the B&SWU. The Lynn Labor Council and Local No. 1041 of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners were par-

34. As early as 1899 several sections of the Lynn Lasters Union were still reluctant to support the newly formed B&SWU. The lasters voted to abandon trade-union lines and join the Socialist Labor Party's STLA. It rescinded this decision in order to avoid internal conflict, but some of the locals did split off and join the STLA. In 1900 the B&SWU tried to join the remaining lasters to the B&SWU but the initial attempts were unsuccessful because many in the Lynn local believed that the B&SWU was too conservative under the new constitution. The central issue in the Lynn fight was not mechanization, since the Lynn local had adopted a strategy towards mechanization of accommodation rather than resistance. It was the larger issue of job control which generated the conflict between the Lynn lasters and the B&SWU. See "Minutes Lynn Lasters Union," vol. 1, 23 August 1899, 26, 31 January 1900.

35. *Lynn Item*, 21 January 1903.

ticularly supportive of the striking cutters.³⁶ Hostility in Lynn was so great that the scabs from the Boot and Shoe Workers Union were forced to retreat to Boston to get the work done for the struck factories.

When the striking stitchers held a fair in support of the strike, it was widely supported by the Lynn labor community. The Lynn branches of the Shoe Workers Protective Union assessed members ten percent of their wages to support the strike. The lasters supported the strike despite their membership in the B&SWU. The Grain Counter Workers Union No. 261 voted to assess their members a hundred dollars for the strikers. By July of 1903 the Lynn lasters broke off from the B&SWU. The Goodyear operators and McKay stitchers supported the cutters, and the Goodyear operators joined the Lasters Protective Union, leaving the B&SWU.³⁷

The Boot and Shoe Workers Union tried to use its national organization and the AF of L to defeat the local insurgents. Workers were brought in from Brockton and Whitman to demonstrate support for the B&SWU. The Boot and Shoe Workers' leaders, seeing the strike as a challenge to their position on unionism, mobilized their resources to destroy the strike. "Having reached the decision that we must under all circumstances protect our contracts, we proceeded to do so, even though at an enormous expense."³⁸ Basic principles were at issue:

We must reach that higher standard of union principle under which the members will spontaneously and enthusiastically rally to the support of our own contracts. The failure upon the part of our membership to understand it was their duty to protect our contracts, was particularly if not wholly responsible for our Lynn trouble with the Knights of Labor. No doubt the opposition at that time was greatly strengthened by the knowledge that many of our members would conclude that they were not called upon to protect our contracts because it involved the taking of another person's job.³⁹

36. *Official Report, Boot and Shoe Cutters Assembly, Knights of Labor* (Lynn, 1905).

37. *Thirty-fourth Annual Report, Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics*, 1903 (Boston, 1904), pp. 377-81.

38. *Sixth Proceedings*, p. 9.

39. *Seventh Proceedings*, p. 19.

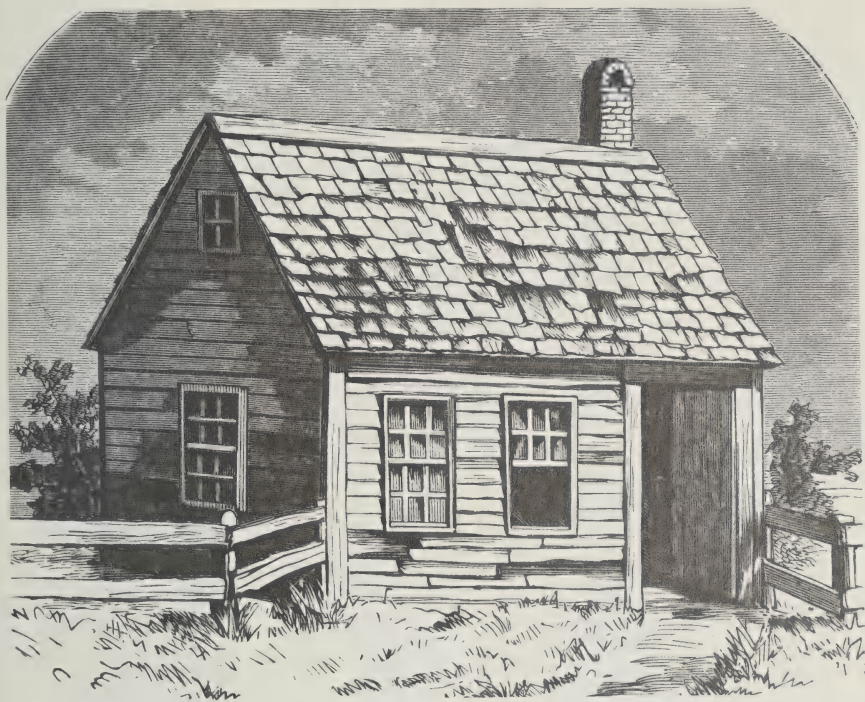
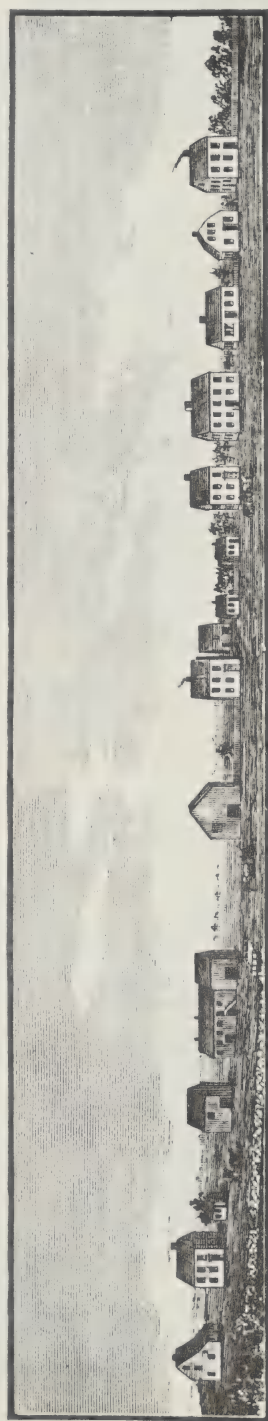


Fig. 1. A typical ten-footer shoe shop from the period before 1850. *From David N. Johnson, Sketches of Lynn (1880).*



Fig. 3. Christopher Robinson's shoe factory, a central shop on S. Common Street about 1850. *From the Lynn City Directory of 1854.*



1. Now Sea st. 2. Timothy Alley. 3. Wm. Richards. 4. Viall's slaughter-house. 5. F. S. & H. Newhall's morocco factory. 6. Winthrop Newhall's tannery. 7. Water trough. 8. Benj. Alley. 9 and 10. Solomon Alley. 11. Richard Pratt. 12. Platiiah Furinton. 13. John Alley, jr.



14. Now Summer st. 15. James Alley. 16. Simeon Breed. 17. Dr. Lummus. 18. Capt. Jos. Mudge. 19. Jerusha Williams. 20 and 21. Stephen Smith. 22. Gamaliel W. Oliver. 23. J. B. Ingalls. 24. Rev. Enoch Mudge. 25. Methodist meeting-house. [See page 70.] (a 1)

MARKET STREET, LYNN, IN 1820. (South-west Side.)

Fig. 2. The scale of ten-footer shops and their proximity to domestic buildings is shown in this 1820 view of Market Street in Lynn. From James R. Newhall, History of Lynn (1897).



Fig. 4. *View of Lynn* by E. Whitefield in 1869, showing a smokestack and other early signs of industry. Essex Institute collection.



Fig. 5. (Left) Lynn City Hall about 1880. From James R. Newhall, *History of Lynn* (1897).

Fig. 6. (Below) Central Block shoe factory building, Market Street, 1876. From James R. Newhall, *Centennial Memorial of Lynn* (1876).





Fig. 7. *Manufacturing Center of Lynn*, 1879, drawn and published by O. H. Vailey and J. C. Hazen, Boston, illustrating the dense development of the factory district by this time. *Essex Institute collection*.



Fig. 8. Shoe factories near the harbor about 1901, showing the concentration of industrial buildings at the city's center, photographed by Frances Benjamin Johnston. *Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

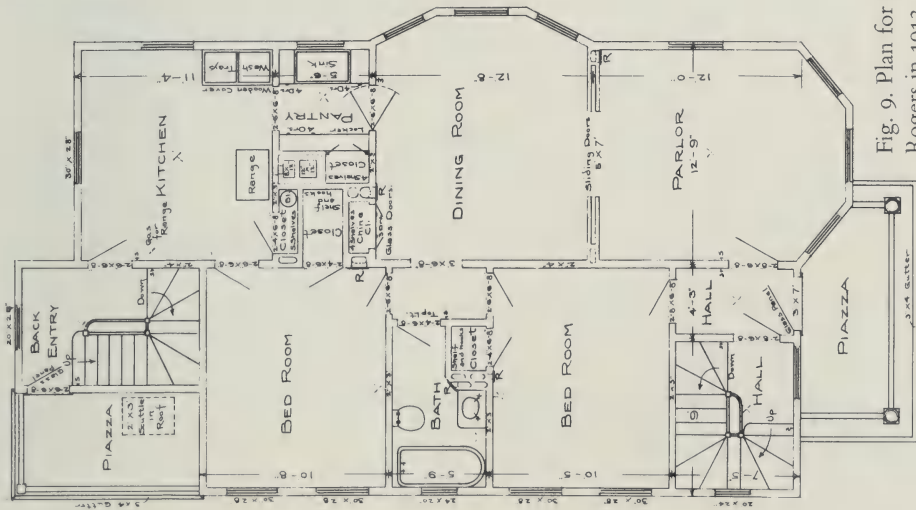


Fig. 9. Plan for the second floor of 373 Boston Street, a triple-decker designed by H. W. Rogers in 1912. Plan courtesy of the Building Department of the City of Lynn.



Fig. 10. Streetscape of triple-deckers on Lawton Street and Henry Avenue in 1911. Essex Institute collection.

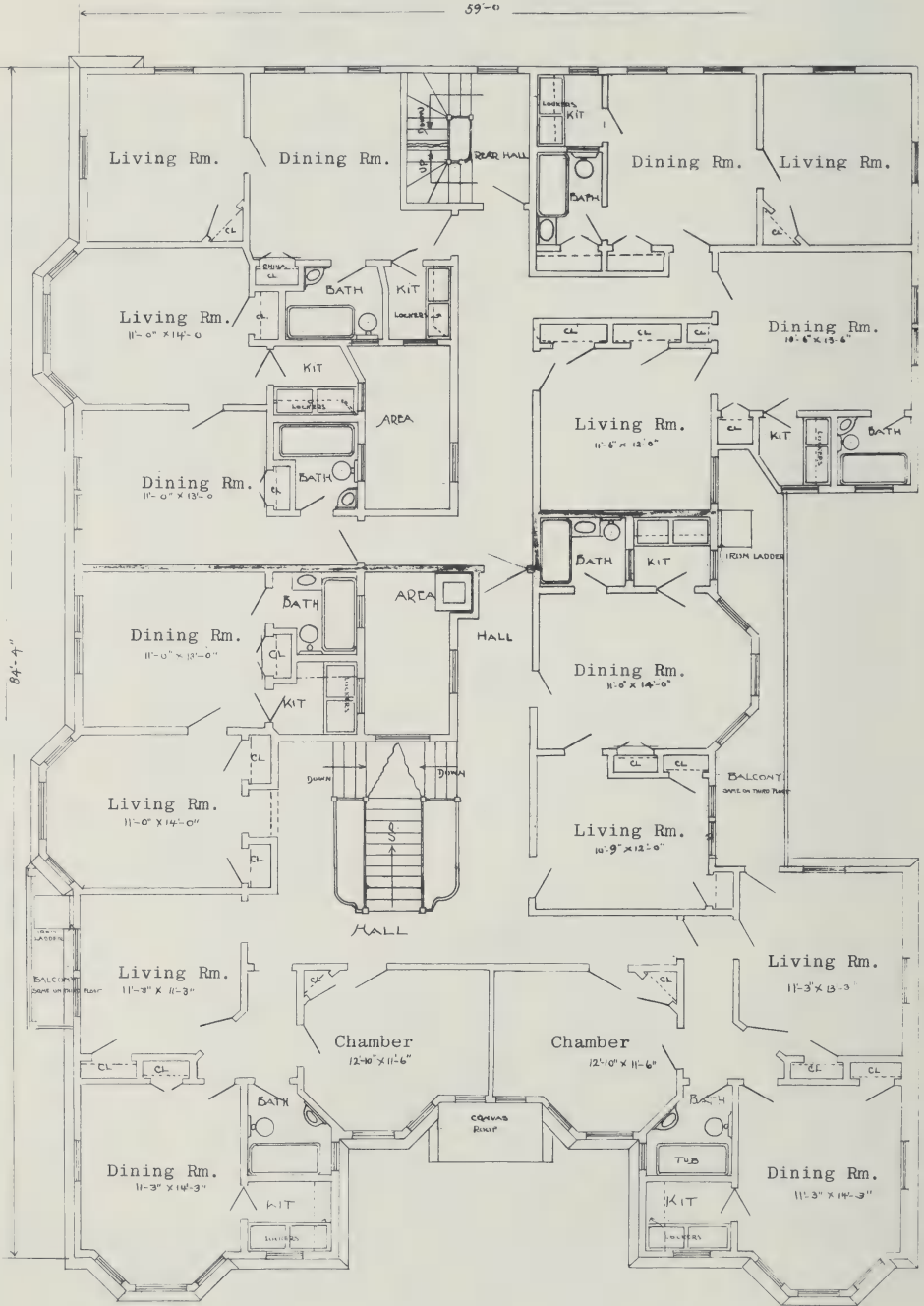


Fig. 12. Plan for the second floor of 172 Washington Street, an apartment building built in 1909. Presumably living rooms and/or dining rooms doubled as bedrooms. Plan courtesy of the Building Department of the City of Lynn.

It was the lack of support for the organization and the conception behind the new constitution that instigated the strikers in Lynn to resist the efforts of the B&SWU.

The strike did take its toll on the B&SWU. Six factories that had been B&SWU gave up their union stamp and settled with the local stitchers and cutters.⁴⁰ The working class in Lynn deserted the union and cast about for other labor organizations.

Although the strike dragged on for six months before being called off in June, both sides claimed victory. The Knights were able to win in five of the original nine factories and claimed that they proved the bankruptcy of the B&SWU. The Boot and Shoe Workers Union claimed that it proved that "under all circumstances [the union would] protect its contracts."⁴¹ In Lynn the strike left a permanent distrust of centralized unionism. Following the strike, the Lasters Union Local No. 32 left the Boot and Shoe Workers Union and joined with the Machine Operators Local No. 260. By the 1904 convention of the B&SWU, where the Lynn workers once had the strongest representation, its shoe workers were represented by only eleven delegates (two of whom were women). Brockton, on the other hand, had sixty-one delegates.

The hostility towards the B&SWU created by the strike led to a series of secessions from the union. Although many Lynn workers remained within the B&SWU (which was still affiliated with the AF of L), those who remained were nonetheless opposed to the national leadership. This opposition produced a challenge to Tobin's presidency of the union in 1907. In that year a Lynn delegate, Murray, ran against Tobin and his policy of arbitration and contracts and won the election. Tobin maintained the presidency, however, by claiming election fraud, and he was sustained by the general convention. He accused his opponents of "falsely play[ing] upon rank and file interests."⁴²

The Boot and Shoe Workers Union continued to debate the conservative structure and orientation of the union from the time of the strike of 1903 through the bitter election of 1907, but Tobin was able to maintain his presidency and his position. He did so partly through his

40. *Thirty-fourth Annual Report*, MBL, pp. 377-81.

41. *Sixth Proceedings*, pp. 9, 11.

42. The election was thrown into a committee which Tobin dominated. The Lynn locals which remained in the B&SWU strongly backed the challenge to Tobin. *Eighth Proceedings* (Toronto, 1907), pp. 28-29, 52-62.

ability to control the smaller isolated locals and partly through his support from the AF of L. Since the B&SWU was the only national AF of L organization of shoe workers, many attempted to stay within the organization and fight Tobin's position. Their fights dominated the national conventions and the union itself. But in the end the struggles of the dissidents were futile. Lynn workers looked elsewhere for an organization which would further the interests of the members, even if at times that action threatened the stability and health of the organization which they created. In response to the strike of 1903, most of the workers of Lynn formed independent unions or joined the Knights of Labor as the stitchers had. In 1909 members of these various independent unions, under the leadership of the Lynn Lasters, met in Lynn to create a new more militant and democratic union. At that convention fifty-five delegates, representing fifteen independent unions but having most of its strength in Lynn, formed the United Shoe Workers of America.⁴³

The USW differed from the B&SWU specifically over the issue of "compulsory arbitration" which the USW felt "sold out" the rank and file. The new union, in the tradition of Lynn unionism, put the controlling power in the hands of the membership and elected Michael Tansy of Lynn as the general secretary-treasurer. Their program called for organizing the unorganized into one strong industrial union with membership control.

Unlike the survival strategy of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, the new United Shoe Workers organization was explicitly concerned about the conflict between the interests of the institution of the working class and the class interests themselves. That conflict was expressed in the claim that "unions are the means to an end, not an end itself."⁴⁴ The new union was based upon "solidarity, strength and education of the members."⁴⁵ Although these terms appear vague, they were an explicit repudiation of the policies of accommodation of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union.

At the original meeting of the United Shoe Workers, the union could claim only 2,700 members, almost all from Lynn, and a treasury of only \$54.45. Yet as the year progressed, more and more shoe workers joined up, and workers from other industrial centers, particularly New York

43. *Lest We Forget*, pp. 6, 10, 11, 15.

44. *Lest We Forget*, p. 15.

45. *Lest We Forget*.

City and Rochester, joined the Lynn organization. In 1913 the remaining members of the Knights of Labor cutters and stitchers went into the United Shoe Workers. By that year the new union had grown to over 11,000 members, well over half of whom were from Lynn.⁴⁶

The United Shoe Workers was dedicated not only to militant unionism, but also to democracy. It was open to workers from all crafts and mixed local labor unions, including children over sixteen and women. Union officials had no vote over policy.⁴⁷ The union looked to the support of its members through their opposition to the employers. The union's leaders argued that the "manufacturer and the union were opponents" and that opposition would be the basis for their support among the workers.⁴⁸

Despite its small treasury and the highly decentralized organizational framework, the union prospered, especially in Lynn. Its support rested primarily upon the appeal of its democratic structure and the ideology of class opposition, and upon the willingness of the members to strike and endure struggle in order to win control over the shop floor itself.⁴⁹ Union support also lay in the complex and developed (yet informal) social institutions of the community of workers in Lynn who traditionally looked to fellow workers for support in labor struggles and in the shop itself.⁵⁰

The success of the United Shoe Workers and their militant policies led one commentator to note that the "manufacturers have little or nothing to say as to the operations in their factories."⁵¹ The manufacturers in Lynn, who realized that the more conservative B&SWU would not make demands about job conditions, attempted several times to force local shoe workers to abandon the more militant unions for the AF of L-B&SWU.

46. A. E. Galster, *The Labor Movement in the Shoe Industry, with Special Reference to Philadelphia* (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1924), pp. 138-41; Davis, *Shoes*, p. 181.

47. Galster, *The Labor Movement*, pp. 150-51.

48. *The Labor Movement*.

49. *The Labor Movement*, p. 156; *Lest We Forget*.

50. Although the United Shoe Workers did not have benefits for their members, they did have an elaborate system for tying the members to the union, not only through appeals of class solidarity and community, but also through social activity. The informal system of activity and social contact reinforced the workers' sense of community and laid the basis for group solidarity. Edward Burt, *The Shoe Craft* (Boston: Everett Press, 1917), pp. 66-69; Ellen Wetherell, *After the Battle* (Lynn: n.p., 1907), p. 7.

51. Robert Billups and Phillip Jones, *Labor and Conditions in the Shoe Industry in Massachusetts, 1920-1924* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1925), p. 23.

On 18 April 1917 the Lynn manufacturers attempted to force the independents out by requiring employees to join the B&SWU. Letters were sent out to individual workers asking them to sign up with the B&SWU. In September of that same year, employers issued a joint public statement announcing their refusal to do business with or to negotiate with either the United Shoe Workers or the equally militant Allied Shoe Workers Union. The Chamber of Commerce endorsed the B&SWU, and the manufacturers asked Samuel Gompers to aid them in bringing the B&SWU to Lynn. By the end of the month, the manufacturers ran advertisements asking the workers to join "a single responsible union." They emphasized that the B&SWU was affiliated with the AF of L. "Finally and decisively we wish to reiterate our formal statement that the manufacturers will open their factories under the stamp of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union affiliated with the AF of L and in no other way."⁵²

The workers responded to these tactics as they had historically by rallying around community institutions and showing class solidarity in support of their unions. Over 10,000 shoe workers were out in the lock-out. Daily rallies were held of up to a thousand workers. Militants denounced both the manufacturers and the B&SWU as enemies of the working class. Finally, in late September, the manufacturers and the Lynn locals agreed to end the lockout on the old wage scale, with a ten percent bonus, no discrimination, and no strikes or lockouts for three years. After five months the workers went back to work, retaining their independent unions and their militant solidarity. Although the manufacturers had been able to extract a no-strike agreement (not effectively enforced), the local workers had been able to maintain their ranks and the power of their unions. Conditions in Lynn remained in the hands of the workers. Their organizations continued to affect not just wages, but also working conditions. By 1919 the United Shoe Workers had over 25,000 members.⁵³

The agreement which ended the strike of 1917 did not end conflicts and disputes in Lynn. A local manufacturer claimed that even the union officials did not have enough "control over their members to prevent them from striking."⁵⁴ The workers in Lynn continued to strike and

52. *Lynn Item*, 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 14, 20 September 1917.

53. Davis, *Shoes*, p. 181.

54. Billups, *Labor and Conditions*, pp. 24, 26.



Fig. 13. Map of central area of Lynn in 1914. Map courtesy of the Lynn Public Library.

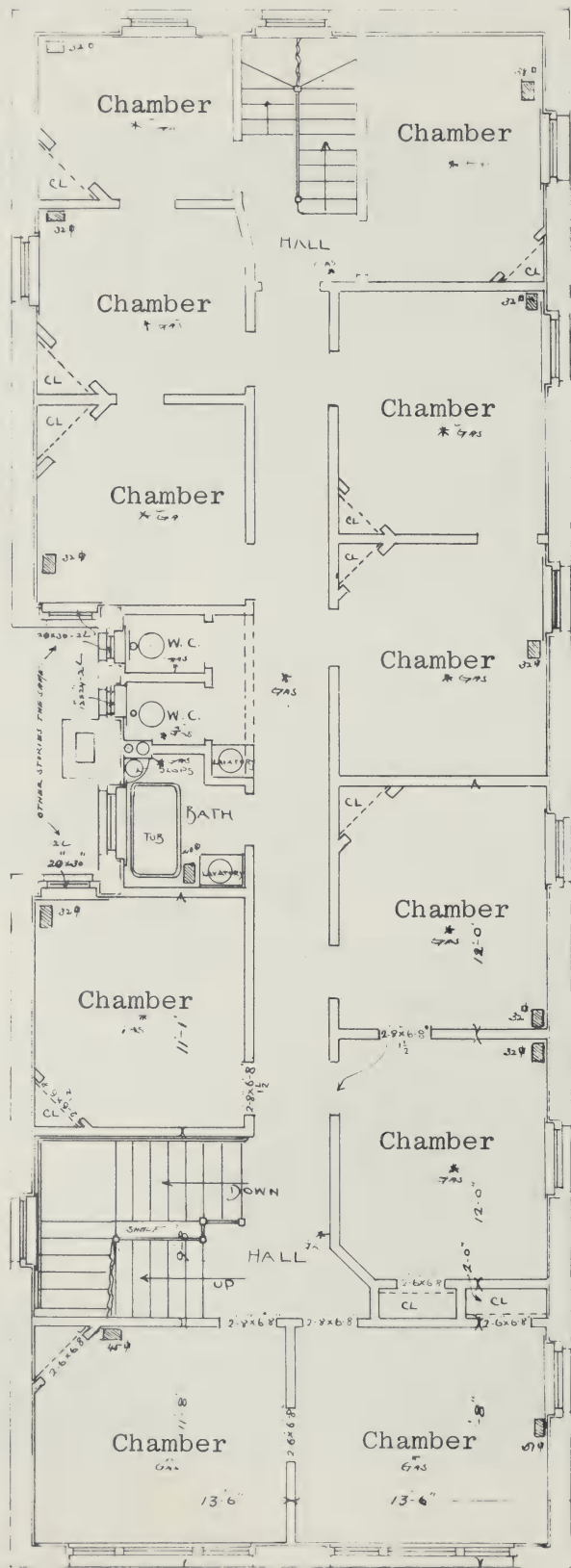


Fig. 14. Plan for the second floor of a lodging house on Oxford Street built in 1909. *Plan courtesy of the Building Department of the City of Lynn.*

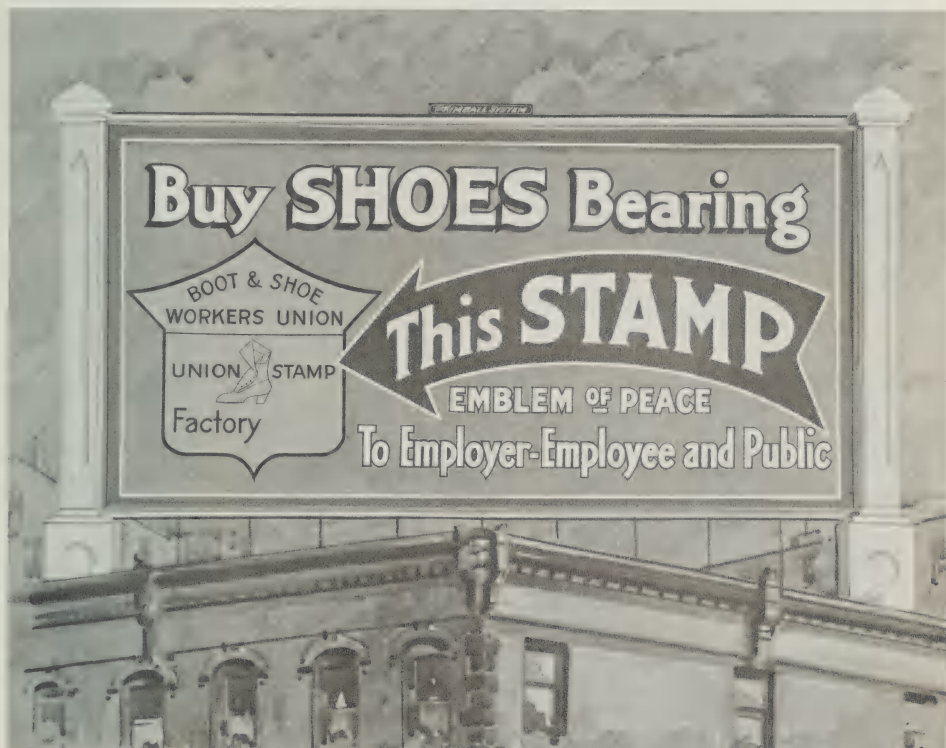


Fig. 15. Painting of a billboard advertising the Union Stamp, located near the former Boot and Shoe Workers Union headquarters in Boston, early twentieth century. *Loan of the Footwear Division, United Food and Commercial Workers' International Union, AFL-CIO & CLC.*



Fig. 16. A typical family outing of the Puritan Shoe Company at Merrimac Park, Massachusetts, 31 July 1926; in the back row are partners in the firm, Harry Weinstein and Louis Sugarman. *Loan of Cécil Weinstein.*



Fig. 17. The great women strikers' parade, 7 March 1860. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



Fig. 18. The stitching room of the J. I. Melanson Shoe Company, Broad Street in Lynn, 1918. Loan of Anita M. Stockbridge.



Fig. 19. An innocent young face in the finishing or packing room, photographed by Frances Benjamin Johnston. *Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*



Fig. 20. (*Left*) An employee of a shoe factory stitching room working on uppers, photographed by Frances Benjamin Johnston. *Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

Fig. 21. (*Below*) Older women factory workers doing fancy gumming on uppers, photographed by Frances Benjamin Johnston. *Courtesy of the Library of Congress.*



fight against the employers on several fronts. In 1920 there were twelve strikes in the city—one was a general strike of shoe workers. In 1921 there were fourteen strikes and one general strike. In 1922 there were seventeen strikes and five general strikes of the shoe workers. Lynn workers believed that the spirit of unionism involved not just bread-and-butter unionism, but issues of job control, hiring practices, and job security, and they struck to defend their involvement with those issues. The spirit of unionism which was deeply rooted in Lynn's history and traditions extended beyond self-interested unionism to class solidarity and unity. "Lynn is a union city. The Shoe workers are union 100%. Your welfare lies entirely in your hands."⁵⁵ This editorial in the *Lynn Union Worker* was not rhetorical. It reflected interaction between the workers, involving a sense of community integrated with a sense of unionism.⁵⁶

Despite the strength of the workers' traditions, Lynn's unions still had to function in the context of hostile manufacturers and without the support of a national organization of labor. In the trying years of the early twenties when the shoe industry began its slow period of decline in the Northeast, the United Shoe Workers suffered a series of defeats, and by late 1922 the union had significantly weakened. The leaders of various independent unions in Lynn, the Allied Shoe Workers, the Protective Union, and a group from the United Shoe Workers met in Boston with other independents to consider amalgamation. Lynn workers favored a new amalgamated union to oppose the Boot and Shoe Workers Union. As the local paper stated, "the intelligence of the shoe workers lies in the independent movement." The B&SWU was, in their opinion, run by "the little band of hold up men [who] have entrenched themselves securely in the high official positions of the [union]."⁵⁷

By 1924 the Amalgamated Shoe Workers had over 6,000 members and the old United had either merged with or joined the other independents.⁵⁸ The switch to the Amalgamated did not change the basic commitment of Lynn workers to a militant and democratic unionism. During the turbulent years of 1923 and 1924 there was a series of strikes in

55. *Union Worker*, 31 August 1922.

56. See *Working Class Community in Industrial America* for a discussion of this phenomenon in Lynn.

57. *Union Worker*, 28 September 1922.

58. *Union Worker*, 21 February 1924.

Lynn which involved basic job-control issues, despite previous agreements to arbitrate such conflicts. The workers in Lynn were willing to give up neither their perception of the importance of control over job conditions nor their traditional tool in labor-capital conflict: the strike.⁵⁹ The declining importance of shoe manufacturing in New England and especially in the older manufacturing centers enabled the manufacturers to break the strikes of local unions. In a series of militant and violent strikes, the shoe workers of Lynn lost twenty small shops by the end of 1924.⁶⁰

The situation in Lynn led members of the more conservative union community to argue for a return of the AF of L Boot and Shoe Workers Union in hopes of stabilizing the labor situation and preventing further movement of shoe factories out of the city. In the spring of 1924 the *Union Worker*, which had earlier argued for remaining independent from the B&SWU, changed to supporting the AF of L union. "There has existed for years in Lynn a well defined opposition to the Federation [AF of L], . . . the radicals were opposed to the Federation because they said it was reactionary. True, it did not uphold the principles of any of the internationals nor did it approve of socialism or Bolshevism. But it has gone its way steadily and conservatively showing from year to year steady increasing strength numerically and financially."⁶¹

Numerical and financial strength were not the major concerns for the Lynn workers. Rather, concern over the union's commitment to protect the worker permeated their discussions. As the *Union Worker* stated (10 April), "the B&SWU [did] not protect on job issues." The paper admitted that, under independent unions, job conditions were dictated and the workers were protected. But, it argued (31 January), "Here the question arises whether the Lynn shoe worker wishes to retain the full measure of independence formally granted him or whether he would prefer to have steadier work and fewer privileges."

The paper felt that under the trying times of the depression in the shoe industry, the local community would opt for "one organization

59. Billups, *Labor and Conditions*, p. 27.

60. Billups, *Labor and Conditions*; *Union Worker*, 27 March 1924. The shoe workers of the city maintained their traditions of independence which involved radical actions against the manufacturers, and a series of secessions from the Amalgamated over the issue of whether or not the union was pursuing radical enough positions. By 1924 there were several independent unions in the city.

61. *Union Worker*, 10 April 1924.

with a nation-wide scope, plenty of backing and autocratic leadership.” The paper argued (14 February) that “democratic control of labor unions [was] beautiful in theory, but [did] not seem to work out in practice.” The result of democratic unionism was that “unimportant groups of workers have defied their officials and interrupted production.” What was needed from this perspective was a “strong and almost completely autocratic control” which would “hold the shoeworkers in hand.” But the Lynn shoe workers looked to another tradition than the existence and persistence of the union. Although the B&SWU “had a quarter of a century of existence . . . [and] it had prospered tremendously,” the local labor community did not feel that the sole purpose of a labor union was to prosper. Nor were the Lynn workers willing to buy the argument put forward by the *Union Worker*, that “the men in control today [of the B&SWU] are bound to die or retire someday and officials may then be chosen acceptable to the majority of the rank and file.” The issue for the Lynn community was not the specific leaders, but the basic philosophy of unionism in the B&SWU.

The intention of the campaign against the Lynn independent unions was to take advantage of the growing fear of radicalism which swept the country during the early twenties and to push Lynn shoe workers into the B&SWU. In 1924 the conservatives in the community argued that the labor trouble in Lynn was totally due to “irregular and irresponsible unionism.” Another attack accused the local radicals of “moving conditions in Lynn to become at times Bolshevistic.”⁶²

In the call for conservative unionism, the *Union Worker* was joined by several leaders of Lynn’s religious community. The head of the local Catholic church (traditionally conservative in Lynn), Father Maley, claimed that “not until the radical element is eradicated from the labor union will the shoe business in Lynn be brought back.” He warned Lynn workers to give up the “spirit that has wrought the ruin of Russia and other European countries, and that is largely responsible for the slump in the shoe industry in Lynn.” He argued that the local spirit represented “a lot of Bolshevistic cranks whose power is the power of destruction.” “Until Americanism takes the place of foreigner propaganda in the unions the outlook for the shoe industry in Lynn is extremely dismal.” “The foreigners [who] have been brought by these

62. *Union Worker*, 29 May 1924.

red leaders to regard the employers as wicked enemies" need to be eliminated from influence in the shoe trade, he concluded.⁶³

The *Union Worker* argued (31 January) that the unskilled workers in Lynn received too high wages and that the unions in Lynn were committed to protecting unskilled workers who were not as important as the skilled workers. Under the Boot and Shoe Workers Union the unskilled workers would be sacrificed and the manufacturer would pay "for the work of this nature just what he wish[ed]."

The push for the B&SWU was supported by the *Union Worker*, the Catholic Church, several of the Protestant leaders, and a group of civic leaders. It was based upon the concept that the Lynn skilled workers would support their own self-interest over the interests of the larger working-class community. The *Union Worker* argued that under the B&SWU, conditions would stabilize, and the skilled workers would still receive equal or better wages and benefits than under the independent Lynn unions.

Lynn workers refused to abandon unskilled workers and objected to the B&SWU sellout of job protection and the class interests. Despite the decline in the trade and the loss of several of Lynn's shoe shops, the campaign to bring in the B&SWU was a "dismal frizzle." The shoe workers of Lynn would "not be led by any civic body or group of individuals . . . they continue[d] to look to their own leaders for advice."⁶⁴

The failure of the B&SWU to win control over the Lynn shoe workers in the spring of 1924 did not bring industrial peace to the city. Shoe orders continued to decline and the city fell deeper and deeper into depression. The growth of the G.E. plant in western Lynn picked up some of the slack of the shoe industry, but mass unemployment still threatened the community of shoe workers. By the end of 1925 the depression in the trade and the continued closings of Lynn shoe factories finally took its toll on the local independents. The Amalgamated collapsed, and in the wake of that collapse the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, after twenty-two years of exile, came back to become the city's major union of shoe workers.

But even then, despite the depressed conditions and the failure of the Amalgamated, the Boot and Shoe Workers Union's conservative position alienated many of Lynn's shoe workers. In 1928 a group split off to

63. *Union Worker*, 20 March 1924.

64. *Union Worker*, 31 January and 26 June 1924.

form the United Shoe Workers of America. In 1929 the Lynn lasters left the B&SWU because of its conservative policies.⁶⁵ In 1932 the Lynn cutters launched the National Shoe Workers Association, which gained over 7,000 Lynn workers. In 1933 the National joined with other independents to form the United Shoe and Leather Workers Union (of 60,000 nationally) and in 1937 the Lynn workers were the leaders in the formation of the United Shoe Workers of America-CIO.

The history of the shoe workers' struggles in Lynn during the early years of the twentieth century gives us insight into the conflicts and dynamics of the American labor movement. Although resistance against mechanization was a factor in the split of the Lynn workers from the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, their continued hostility to the B&SWU had more to do with basic ideological conflicts than temporary conflict over strategies concerning mechanization. The Lynn workers continued to forego the advantages of joining the mainstream of the American labor movement and of gaining the stability and support of the AF of L long after the issue of mechanization of the lasters' trade exploded in Lynn. The long-term issues of job conditions and shop control generated Lynn workers' sense of militance and continued conflict with B&SWU. For the workers of Lynn, unions did not exist in order to exist, but in order to protect the workers in the continued conflict with the manufacturers. From this perspective, union recognition was important only as a means to an end and not as an end in itself. It mattered little that the B&SWU had a long successful history if that success was not measured in control over the job conditions of the work place. The process of work itself was what gave the Lynn workers their sense of a common purpose and a need for militant action.

Yet the question arises, why did the Lynn workers constantly form independent unions while other shoe workers stayed with the Boot and Shoe Workers Union? The answer to that lies in the dynamics of group and institutional behavior. The interaction between organizations of the working class and the ideology of the working class is a complex phenomenon. Workers experienced a common exploitation, yet their ability to organize and control organizations was dependent upon the traditions and informal institutions which they developed over time. Those traditions, reinforced and solidified in taverns, clubs, and ritualized so-

65. Davis, *Shoes*, pp. 177, 182.

cial gatherings, interpreted and sustained the local community in their conflict with the manufacturers. Without them, the working-class community was vulnerable because it would lack the infrastructure to sustain itself in the face of defeat. In such a condition, workers looked to whatever institutions would offer them some form of protection and support in their constant conflict with the manufacturers. If those institutions were out of the control of the workers, then the workers became victims rather than the masters of their own organizations.⁶⁶

When the institutions of the working class failed to interpret workers' anger and alienation in a manner consistent with the city's traditions, Lynn shoemakers rejected the formal institutions and recreated ones which were consistent with their own perceptions of reality. Yet their perceptions of reality were partly conditioned by the formal institutions themselves. With a strong background of tradition and continuity in Lynn, the city's workers had the confidence to reject the B&SWU and the AF of L for the unknown territory of independent unionism. They did so because, although that territory was unknown, they had old maps of community traditions and informal institutions to guide their way.

The Lynn workers did try, and at times managed, to join with other independents to form national unions. Lynn workers tended to dominate these unions, but nonetheless they were not opposed to the loss of local autonomy as much as to the loss of shop-floor independence. They rejected unions either local or national which failed to maintain shop-floor control. Democratic unionism for the Lynn workers meant control over the union, so that they could prevent the type of conservative unionism which gained control over the B&SWU. It became clear to the Lynn workers that the rank and file were more radical than the union hierarchy, and that unionism which was democratically controlled would also be radical and militant, but, more important, would address the interests of the working class as opposed to the interests of the union itself.

66. Unions have to be understood as both formal and—at times and under certain conditions—informal. In Lynn, for example, workers used the union not only as an instrument in their battles with the employers, but as informal social centers. This social interaction reinforced the workers' sense of community. The unions were also forms for socialization and schools of class consciousness. This dual role also reinforced the workers' sense that the union was under their control.

The experience of the Lynn shoe workers also sheds some light on the labor movement itself. Until recently, many historians following the Perlman-Commons school have argued that institutional unionism was inherently conservative and that the process of union growth in this country was the process of the maturing of bread-and-butter unionism. What this analysis lacks is a perception of the conflicts involved in the evolution of bread-and-butter unionism. It is implied by the Perlman-Commons school that the workers themselves supported the gradual evolution of bread-and-butter unionism. In fact, if the struggle of the Lynn workers is any indication, bread-and-butter unionism was seen by many workers as being the bread and butter of the union institution itself and not of the workers.

By looking at a particular union, a picture of struggle emerges between the leadership and the rank and file over the direction of the union. If Lynn is any indication of other areas, we must not assume that all American workers moved to bread-and-butter unionism, but rather that the union leadership who controlled the institution of the union defined the issues of the working class in bread-and-butter terms—a definition which in the case of B&SWU led to considerable conflict and dissent. The radical and militant unionists in the shoe industry were forced out of the labor mainstream and of the AF of L, enabling the conservatives within the AF of L to maintain control. How many working-class communities would have behaved like Lynn, had they possessed the same traditions and developed the same informal institutions, is unclear. What is clear is that the course of the American labor movement had many streams and paths, and that in focusing only on the policies of the union leadership (and a few major deviant challenges), we are perhaps neglecting the deeper insights provided by the rich history of the American labor movement.

From Bench Laborer to Manufacturer: The Rise of Jewish Owners in the Declining Shoe Industry in Lynn

By MARTIN BLATT*

THE Jewish population of Lynn remained quite small until the end of the nineteenth century. Spurred by fear of pogroms, revolutionary upheaval in Russia in 1905, and the vision of a land of opportunity, thousands of eastern European Jews came to the United States at that time and during the first two decades of the twentieth century.¹ An examination of the Massachusetts state census records for this period reveals a dramatic increase in Lynn's eastern European population.² Only country of national origin was recorded, but it is most likely that a substantial number of newcomers from Poland and Russia were Jewish. It should be noted that the Massachusetts Census Act of 1924 modified the scope of the census by eliminating the term "national origin." This move coincided with the 1924 federal restrictions on immigration, which had very strong advocacy in Massachusetts. At any rate, records prior to 1925 provide a clear picture. The number of "Lynners" born in Poland went from 22 in 1895 to 659 in 1905 and 1,362 in 1915. Russia, exclusive of Russian Poland (a category not listed in 1895 or 1905), had a total of 3,828 emigrants to Lynn by 1915. Many of these immigrants were undoubtedly Jewish and a good number of them went to work in the shoe factories of Lynn.

*Mr. Blatt, a doctoral candidate in Boston University's American and New England Studies Program, was the 1978-79 Boston University Scholar at the Essex Institute. He would like to acknowledge the assistance of Nathan Gass, president of the North Shore Jewish Historic Society, which is planning a major study of the Jewish community of Lynn, and Bruce Kupelnick, an exhibition volunteer and Lynn native. The author wishes to say that the arguments and conclusions presented here are his own.

1. See Salo Wittmayer Baron, *Stepped By Adversity: Essays and Addresses on American Jewish Life* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971), pp. 269-414.

2. *Massachusetts State Census on Population, 1895, 1905, 1915, 1925, 1935, 1945.*

Shoe production in Lynn underwent dramatic changes in the nineteenth century. From a handicraft industry based in small shops called "ten-footers," Lynn shoe manufacturing was converted to a factory system by 1870.³ Most of the workers who came to live in Lynn and work in its factories initially were native-born Americans. However, after the turn of the century, Lynn became increasingly dependent upon foreign immigrants for its labor supply. According to John Cumbler, "Although shoemaking was dominated by the native workers until well into the twentieth century, by 1920 62% of Lynn's population was either foreign-born or children of one or more foreign-born parents. . . . They often came over with shoemaking experience . . . just under 49% of the Russian Jews . . . had had shoemaking experience before entering the United States."⁴ A significant number of Jews were eventually able to break away from the workbench and become manufacturers.

The first shoe manufacturers in Lynn were almost all Yankees. These men benefited tremendously from the introduction of the factory system as "... productivity streaked ahead at breakneck speed. . . . Comparing the statistics from 1875 and 1855 the factory system enabled approximately 2,000 fewer workers to produce 7,000,000 more shoes!"⁵ The shoe industry in Lynn continued to expand until the late teens. Who controlled the industry? "The Lynn city directories from the late-nineteenth through the early-twentieth centuries reflect fairly continuous domination by a few groups of shoe manufacturing families."⁶ It was only after the shoe industry had peaked in Lynn that Jewish manufacturers became a significant proportion of the management group.

An examination of the listing of shoe manufacturers in selected Lynn city directories reveals a clear pattern.⁷ As the total number of manu-

3. See Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 73-96.

4. John T. Cumbler, "Continuity and Disruption: Working-Class Community in Lynn and Fall River, Massachusetts, 1880-1950," unpublished diss., University of Michigan, 1974, p. 29. See pp. 16-47. Just as I was concluding this article, it came to my attention that Cumbler's excellent thesis has been published as a book: *Working-Class Community in Industrial America: Work, Leisure, and Struggle in Two Industrial Cities, 1880-1930* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979). Mr. Cumbler has also written an article on Lynn's labor problems for this issue of the *Historical Collections*.

5. Dawley, p. 94.

6. Cumbler diss., p. 35.

7. *Lynn City Directories*, 1910, 1916, 1921, 1926, 1930, 1935, 1940, 1950, 1955, 1965, 1975.

facturers dramatically declined, the proportion of Jewish manufacturers increased. Of seventy-six manufacturers listed in 1910, only three can be identified as Jewish-owned establishments.⁸ In contrast, in 1930, there were forty-seven Jewish manufacturers out of a total of eighty-eight listed. Despite the increase in number of manufacturers, the shoe industry in Lynn had begun a long, steady decline after World War I, culminating in its virtual disappearance from Lynn by the 1950s. In 1940, for example, the high proportion of Jewish establishments continued as fourteen of thirty-eight firms had Jewish proprietors. The total number of manufacturers in Lynn slid from thirty-two in 1955 to twenty-two in 1965 and a mere ten in 1975. It should be noted that the shoe industry in Lynn generated many related businesses such as shoe forms, shoe findings (accessories of various kinds), jobbers, and so on. Jewish involvement increased in these activities as well as in manufacturing itself.

Seven individuals from the shoe industry in Lynn were interviewed during the past year. Five were shoe manufacturers (three of whom were tape-recorded), one man ran a findings business, and one was a major shoe retailer.⁹ From talking with these men, a composite picture emerged of the characteristics of Lynn's Jewish shoe manufacturers. Perhaps the best way of relating their experiences is to record briefly the history of one manufacturer, Cecil Weinstein.

Cecil Weinstein was born in London in 1913. Hearing that America was a golden land and Lynn a shoe city, Weinstein's father had a great desire to emigrate. He was a very skilled shoe cutter, able to cut shoes equally well with either hand. The elder Weinstein left Britain in December 1913. Cecil Weinstein recalled that his father "was a fast and expert worker. There were no cutting machines in those days. . . . Many men like my father came to Lynn with some shoe-working experience.

8. Identification was made by Nathan Gass, who is a long-time Jewish resident of Lynn and who pointed out the increasingly Jewish composition of the Lynn shoe manufacturing. Often he was able to identify a firm's owner on the basis of personal knowledge. Reliance on name identification only may have led to some errors. However, this should not alter the accuracy of the overall trend described here.

9. Oral history interviews with manufacturers: Cecil Weinstein, Marblehead, Mass., 16 February 1979; Archie Kleven, Newton, Mass., 28 February 1979; Harry Clayman, Chestnut Hill, Mass., 12 March 1979; findings business: Sam Levine, Lynn, Mass., 12 February 1979; retailer: Jack Musinsky, Lynn, Mass., 11 April 1979. An unrecorded discussion was conducted with Mort and Bert Jacobs, proprietors of A. Jacobs and Sons Co., Inc., Lynn, Mass., 7 March 1979. All interviews were conducted by Martin Blatt and Bruce Kupelnick.

Some came as stitchers, lasters, cutters; they came to make their fortunes.”¹⁰ Weinstein’s father did cutting work on a contract basis. He was accustomed to taking work home with him, all on a piecework basis. He worked hard, driven by a strong ambition to have his own factory.

Weinstein’s father went into business with Louis Sugarman, a peddler who had managed to save money and buy some real estate. Together they formed the Puritan Shoe Company on Mulberry Street in Lynn. “This was the center of the shoe factories; they abounded all over.” Sugarman supplied the capital while Weinstein’s father contributed his expert skill in making shoes. The factory eventually employed 200–250 people, mostly engaged in handwork. Cecil Weinstein recalled coming in after school to work in the factory, doing odd jobs like lacing up shoes, putting on bows, working in the packing room, and gaining a general knowledge of shoe manufacturing.

In 1928, when Cecil graduated from high school, Cecil’s father and Sugarman parted amicably. Cecil and his father opened the Weinstein Shoe Company on Essex Street, across from the old courthouse. Puritan was carried on by Sugarman’s son and eventually became Mayflower Shoe. Father and son were the sole executives in Weinstein Shoe Company since they couldn’t afford the luxury of managers. Cecil Weinstein recalled that he “learned how to cut up leather economically—placing the patterns on the leather. A cutter could waste more than he earned in cutting up the upper leather. I learned how to use the lasting machine. In general, I became very familiar with all aspects of shoe production.” Weinstein Shoe produced a low-priced woman’s novelty shoe. According to Weinstein, styling was a big factor in the industry prior to the Depression years. Weinstein characterized shoe manufacturing as a “hand-to-mouth business until you could accumulate some capital. Besides renting equipment, we had to buy materials—leather, needles, threads, soles, heels—and pay wages. . . . We were always looking to save money. The creed of the immigrant was: if you can’t afford it, do without it.”

Weinstein recalled that

many manufacturers who came over as immigrants from the old country started businesses as my father did in the 1920s. . . . They

10. The narrative that follows and all quotes in this section are taken from the Cecil Weinstein interview.

ran their factories more closely than the large Yankee factories. . . . The Yankees knew little about their businesses, but nonetheless made money. Their factories were in the hands of foremen and superintendents while they were out on the golf course. The Jewish manufacturer worked hard in the factory all day and did a lot of work himself. The Jewish man from the old country built up his business with his own two hands. The Jews started on the bench.

It is difficult to prove or disprove Weinstein's contentions regarding Yankee manufacturers. That he felt so strongly on the subject is significant in itself. There are at least two levels of conflict apparent in his remarks. One is that of the struggling entrepreneur against the established businessman; the second is the tension between Yankee culture and Jewish culture, or all immigrant cultures for that matter, which seemingly represented something alien, foreign, and lowly.¹¹ Weinstein claimed that "many of the Yankee manufacturers were 'blue-bloods' who belonged to the old Oxford Club, a very anti-Semitic organization."

Cecil Weinstein and his father—known in the shoe trade as the Englishman, a tough fighter—worked hard and put in long hours. "We ran our place very tightly. I'd see a piece of string on the floor—and I'm not exaggerating—I'd pick it up. I could pick up scraps from the floor around a cutter, reconstruct the hide, and show him how patterns could be cut more efficiently." This penchant for economy was in part due to enterprising business behavior and also, perhaps more important, due to the fact that as the Jews were becoming a significant factor in the Lynn shoe industry, the industry and its profits were declining.

According to Weinstein, the unions gave Puritan Shoe a very hard time. His father declared an open shop and after a year-long strike (1923–24) the union was broken. Gregory and Read, another manufacturer, followed Puritan and declared an open shop. The relations between management and labor, Weinstein related, were not characterized solely by conflict.

11. For an excellent discussion of Yankee vs. foreign (in this case, Italian) cultures in Massachusetts of the 1920s, see Upton Sinclair's historical novel of the Sacco-Vanzetti case entitled *Boston* (Cambridge: reprinted by Robert Bentley, Inc., 1978, from the 1928 edition).

Puritan Shoe would take its members on outings. In those days [1920s] you couldn't hire a bus, so we hired moving vans and put long wooden seats inside. That was how we went on outings. . . . I remember one such outing; there was a big sign on the van—"Busy Bees of Lynn," with the picture of a beehive and bees buzzing around it. The workers went to Canobie Lake, which was a famous place for picnics just over the Massachusetts line in Salem, New Hampshire. Factories would go out there. . . . The help would have a nice day's outing with the family—and it would be a wonderful thing (fig. 16).

Weinstein Shoe Company was opened in 1928 as a nonunion shop. Cecil Weinstein felt close to his workers and their families and believed that the unions were unnecessary. "Our pay scale had to be comparable to union wages, since you were competing on the market."

The Depression saw many factories go out of business. "Terrible conditions were forced upon management and labor by the deteriorating economic situation. . . . In 1930 business was so lousy, and my father was successful enough, we closed down for four weeks and went to London to visit the family." With the onset of World War II, Weinstein Shoe and other factories experienced some revitalization. The method of making shoes was becoming more mechanized, although it never became as fully automated as other industries. Some factories installed conveyor systems, but Weinstein Shoe retained the rack system for moving shoes. Cecil Weinstein made a low-priced shoe, and it became increasingly more difficult for him to get skilled help. The factories selling more expensive shoes could pay a little more and offer wages instead of piecework.

In 1963 Cecil Weinstein became fed up with Lynn. He decided he either had to leave Lynn or go out of business. His greatest competitor for labor was the unemployment office "where people could get paid for not working. . . . In the earlier days, there was a different feeling—a different morality—for the immigrant worker. A man was more responsible for his job; he walked to work in a blizzard. Also, the shoe industry was declining; there was no future in it and the worker knew that."

Cecil Weinstein moved his firm to Richmond, Maine, and set up his factory in the old Ames Textile building. He took only three super-

visory employees, although he had had up to 150 workers in Lynn. An unsuccessful effort was made to keep him from moving to Maine. "We were referred to as a runaway factory—but look, it was either that or go out of business. . . . There was the problem with the unemployment office, and then there are the Lynn Realty Company buildings—old, rat-infested, eight to nine stories high. You can't manufacture in those places; you need low buildings that trucks can get up to." Weinstein Shoe Company prospered for a while after breaking in an entire new crew of workers, but then encountered serious competition from foreign imports. Weinstein decided to liquidate his firm in 1967. "I wouldn't be able to shave myself in the morning if I had gone bankrupt. This was my background. I paid off all my creditors one hundred cents on the dollar. We always paid our bills." Today, Cecil Weinstein is semiretired and involved in real estate. "Shoe manufacturing is all I've known. Ever since I was a boy, for almost fifty years, I've been involved with shoe productions."

The results of the other interviews I conducted tended to confirm the central points made by Cecil Weinstein. The Jewish shoe manufacturer was usually an immigrant. Manufacturers Harry Clayman and Archie Kleven, findings businessman Sam Levine, and retailer Jack Musinsky all were either born (or had parents born) in Russia. They came to Lynn on the basis of having friends or relatives in town. Like Weinstein, Harry Clayman was involved with his parents in business. Family establishments were not uncommon among the Jewish manufacturers.

Harry Clayman agreed with Weinstein in saying that the Jewish owners of the shoe companies started on the bench. "The Jews who became manufacturers were mainly from Russia. . . . Three Russian Jewish families—Borkum, Izenstadt, and the Claymans—started the Jews in shoe manufacturing in Lynn. They were energetic, hard-working people, who worked their way up."¹²

Regarding anti-Semitism, Archie Kleven's wife stated that "the roots of Jewish ambition stem from anti-Semitism."¹³ She felt that Jews were determined to survive and prosper despite the many roadblocks that crossed their path. It should be noted that neither Archie Kleven nor Harry Clayman felt that anti-Semitism was a special problem in Lynn.

In reference to the rise of Jewish manufacturers in a declining in-

12. Clayman interview.

13. Clayman interview.

dustry, Archie Kleven put the matter very succinctly: "While the Jews made dimes, the Gentiles [non-Jews] made dollars." Jack Musinsky, who has been in the shoe-retailing business for sixty-two years, stated: "You couldn't compare a Jacobs [Jewish firm] with a Creighton [leading non-Jewish manufacturer]. The non-Jews had substantial factories and had the pick of the clientele and workers."¹⁴

All the manufacturers interviewed were hostile to union activity. Some of their comments were scathing, referring to union organizers as thugs and characterizing unions as totally corrupt institutions. The mildest comment was made by Jack Musinsky, shoe retailer, who felt that manufacturers and unions were equally responsible for the shoe industry's problems.

Cecil Weinstein revealed a certain old-fashioned style in his pride at not going bankrupt when he liquidated his firm. Throughout his interview, he repeatedly mentioned the emphasis which he and his father had placed on economy and hard work. Harry Clayman observed that the original Jewish manufacturers were not modern capitalists in that they did not issue stock or develop marketing programs; they built their capital on hard work and complete thrift. Archie Kleven, for example, spoke with deep pride of how he had always dealt honestly with people and said that "there wasn't a year that I was in the business that I didn't make money."

In a sense, the answer to the question of why many Jews entered shoe manufacturing is a simple one. Archie Kleven explained: "The Jews went into the business because they could make money." Jewish newcomers in America, like several other immigrant groups, sought economic mobility as well as education and acculturation to American life.¹⁵ Jewish mobility did have certain special characteristics.¹⁶ Sixty-six percent of Jews had some sort of urban skills as immigrants. Thus many Jews probably came to Lynn with some shoe-working experience or were drawn to an urban environment where there were many job opportunities. The first generation of Jewish immigrants from eastern

14. Musinsky interview.

15. See John Clark, David Katzman, Richard McKinzie, and Theodore Wilson, *Three Generations in Twentieth Century America: Family, Community, and Nation* (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1977).

16. The following discussion is based on a talk on "Jewish Upward Mobility" given by Professor Peter Dreier, Sociology Department, Tufts University, at a meeting of the Boston Committee to Combat Anti-Semitism, Boston, Mass., 21 May 1978.

Europe were almost entirely part of the industrial working class. Some in the second generation opened small and medium-sized businesses in situations where a relatively small capital investment was required, as in the shoe industry. In the next generation, some of these firms were transformed into larger businesses. The second generation also found employment in civil service, clerical, sales, professional, and semiprofessional jobs. According to Henry Feingold, by the 1930s Jews had established a distinct economic profile which left them excluded from ownership in major industries.¹⁷ Jews were basically involved in the margins of the economy and "it was clear by the thirties that the professions would easily rival and perhaps eventually overtake a business career as the favored choice of third-generation offspring."¹⁸

The third and fourth generation of Jews experienced a decline in self-employment, but the legacy of small businesses continued. There were still some clerical and sales workers, and there were increases in government employment at all levels and in semiprofessional work; also, middle-level-management opportunities in the corporate world opened up considerably. A large proportion of American Jews (sociologist Peter Dreier estimates fifty percent) are employed currently in the professional managerial class, which is in conflict with both the working class and the owning class.¹⁹ It engages in the social management of the working class as agents of the owners, and yet has little significant economic power through ownership. Jewish participation in the owning class is generally confined to the following areas: entertainment, clothing, urban real estate, and retail stores.

The analysis of upward mobility outlined above explains in part how some Jews got involved in shoe manufacturing. However, it would seem that the principal determinants in their entry into the owners' class were the "fringe" status of shoe production in the American economy and the decline of the industry during the 1920s. These two factors afforded Jewish men their opportunity.

The American economy has become more and more divided. First, there is the group which includes the largest corporations. These com-

17. See Henry L. Feingold, *Zion in America: The Jewish Experience from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974), pp. 258-77.

18. Feingold, p. 261.

19. See Barbara and John Ehrenreich, "The Professional-Manual Class," *Radical America* 11(1977):7-33.

panies are characterized by the following: stable work forces, strong unions rewarded for cooperative behavior, monopoly pricing, large capital investments, modern physical plants, and investment in many kinds of job-training programs. The second group, on the other hand, consists of highly competitive industries such as textiles or shoes. "In these sectors, firms are small, pushed to the margin by competition, too penniless to be able to invest in new work processes or new mechanisms for controlling workers."²⁰ There tend to be low wages, poor working conditions, considerable variability in employment stability (owing, for example, to the seasonal nature of shoe production), and harsh discipline. These two groups were not as sharply defined in Lynn in the 1920s, but the dichotomy was becoming firmly established in the mid-1930s at the time Jewish manufacturers were beginning to dominate the Lynn shoe industry.

The other major trend which afforded some Jews an opportunity to move into ownership positions was the decline of the shoe industry in the 1920s. John Cumbler claimed a crucial factor here was "the industrial depression which hit the New England industries generally before the rest of the country."²¹ It would seem that Jewish manufacturers filled a space created by the movement of capital out of a declining industry. Cumbler identified a second factor affecting Lynn's shoe industry: "... shoe manufacturers were following a national trend of moving out of the highly industrialized East Coast regions. . . . This movement was due to a series of factors such as land costs, rental space available, taxes, as well as labor costs and unrest. The shoe industry was one of the first industries to be affected by this movement because it was a low capital investment industry." Harry Clayman finished his fifty-year involvement in the shoe industry by buying into the Bangor Shoe Company in Maine, where he remained from 1954 to 1972. Cecil Weinstein, as noted above, left Lynn for Richmond, Maine, in 1963. Several other Jewish manufacturers moved their businesses to rural states in the North or elsewhere.

All the manufacturers I interviewed pointed to the leasing policy of

20. David M. Gordon, ed., *Problems in Political Economy: An Urban Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1977), "Editor's Introduction" to Chapter 2, "Employment," p. 60. This entire chapter, pp. 53-142, is very useful on the subject of primary vs. secondary sectors in the economy.

21. Cumbler diss., p. 37.

United Shoe Machinery Corporation (USM) as a significant factor in their ability to get into industry. USM made all major machinery available on the basis of a rental fee plus a unit charge. Seventy percent of the cost on a machine might be the unit charge. Thus, what a manufacturer paid was based largely on what he produced.²² The leasing policy allowed a manufacturer to engage in production without needing a large capital investment. However, since the leasing policy was instituted when USM was founded at the turn of the century, this policy was not of benefit only to the Jewish manufacturers. Despite USM's self-congratulatory boasting regarding "ethical dealings with shoe manufacturers" and their claim that the manufacturers' only complaint with them was that it was too easy for a fellow to go into business,²³ there is strong evidence that the leasing policy was based on rather simple profit-making motives. The labor intensity of the shoe industry tended to limit the size of shoe factories as did the product mix, which involved a complicated variety of shoes. It would seem that it was neither ethics nor desire to help the small man, but a rational understanding of the shoe industry that led USM to continue to expand its leasing policy. If USM wanted to maximize its profits, it needed to extract money from the shoe producers in a labor-intensive, highly competitive arena. Sales of expensive shoe machinery would not have been nearly as profitable over the long term as the leasing policy proved to be.

There was a marked ambivalence toward USM among the people interviewed. Cecil Weinstein noted that "it was easier to go into business with USM," but "... there was a tremendous obligation you put yourself under when you leased a machine. There were installation and return charges and often an indefinite lease. A machine could be in your factory twenty-five years and be falling apart. If you put enough pressure on them, you could get them to replace it." Harry Clayman felt that "without USM, there would not have been a shoe industry in America," but "... once they knew they had total control of shoe machinery, they started setting ridiculous prices." Clayman did express his

22. Phone conversation with John Hardy, manager of marketing services, USM Corporation, 19 April 1979.

23. *USM Today*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1974. Published by USM Corporation, Boston, Mass., p. 10.

sorrow that the federal government finally won an antitrust decree in 1955 against USM after decades of litigation.

Union activity was seen by all manufacturers I spoke with as a key element leading to the decline of the shoe industry. There is a certain validity to this contention of the manufacturers, but there are other critical factors explaining the decline. The shoe industry in the 1920s was declining and certain changes were taking place. The development of shoe machinery "reduced the necessity for a body of highly trained workmen. It was easier to train a labor force."²⁴ After World War I, styles became much more important in shoes, due to escalating cultural changes. "Novelty footwear calls for a maximum of style with a minimum of cost."²⁵ Lynn had been for some time the leading producer of women's shoes. The USM policy led to "a tendency for the industry to have a greater capacity than it needed."²⁶ The variety and importance of women's shoe styles and chronic overproduction led to a very competitive market. The increasing automation of shoe production made the skilled workers of Lynn less important, and low capital requirements for opening a firm elsewhere made the manufacturers more willing and able to move out of Lynn.²⁷ "The one major expense other than leather is labor. As a result, a difference in labor cost is the most important competitive differential which a manufacturer can enjoy. . . ."²⁸ The open-shop drive described above by Cecil Weinstein was a common trend affirmed by the other manufacturers I spoke with. "As the shoe industry declined locally, the tactics of the remaining manufacturers became more and more hostile towards the workmen."²⁹ At the same time as

24. Thomas L. Norton, *Trade Union Policies in the Massachusetts Shoe Industry, 1919-1929* (New York: AMS Press, 1968, reprinted from the 1932 edition), p. 31.

25. Norton, p. 36.

26. Norton, p. 27.

27. For the tremendous impact of automation on the work process in America, see Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974). Braverman notes that, with increased automation, a deal was struck: "Conceding higher relative wages for a shrinking proportion of workers in order to guarantee uninterrupted production was to become, particularly after the Second World War, a widespread feature of corporate labor policy, especially after it was adopted by union leaderships" (p. 150). It is significant to note that the shoe industry, not being a part of the monopoly sector, was essentially excluded from these arrangements.

28. Norton, p. 339.

29. Cumbler diss., p. 38.

the owners became tougher and began to move out, Lynn shoe workers displayed their long tradition of militant union activity.³⁰

It was the assertion of this union militancy in the face of the particular circumstances in Lynn that helped to drive shoe manufacturers out of business or out of the city. As economist David Gordon aptly warned, unions may develop in the secondary segment of the economy, "but they can rarely transform their militance into real power because they might easily put their individual employers out of business."³¹ Historian John Cumbler argued that the unions were an important protection for the workers of Lynn.³² Independent and militant, these unions appealed to both native and foreign-born shoe workers. Oral histories conducted with former workers disclose the problems with piecework, the absence of grievance procedures, and the need for a union.³³ May Young, a long-time activist in the militant United Shoe Workers, called the union "the only salvation that a worker had."³⁴ It is an irony of history that the unions in Lynn, which did so much to aid the shoe workers, did not function as a salvation in the end but rather were one of several key factors contributing to the decline of the industry.

A study of the rise and decline of Lynn's shoe industry raises several questions that deserve further examination. What were the perceptions of the early generations of shoe manufacturers regarding the newer group? Why did the Yankees of Lynn leave shoe production and where did they invest their capital? What were the mobility patterns and the economic and demographic changes that the Jewish community as a whole experienced in Lynn? How would these trends compare to data for other ethnic groups (English, Irish, French-Canadian, Italian, Greek, and so on) that were also statistically significant components of Lynn's

30. See Cumbler diss., especially pp. 73–128, for the best review of this militancy.

31. Gordon, p. 60.

32. Cumbler diss., p. 77.

33. Oral history interviews conducted by the author with Benjamin Bronstein, Lynn, Mass., 11 December 1978; Samuel Rodman, Swampscott, Mass., 3 February 1979. Also, refer to "Before the Union, You're Here Today, and Gone Tomorrow: Life and Work in the Shoe Industry—Interview with Grace Curcio Nomey" conducted by William T. Wise, Lynn, Mass., 17 February 1979, under the supervision of R. Wayne Anderson, Department of History, Northeastern University.

34. "The Union Was the Only Salvation That a Worker Had: Life and Work in the Shoe Industry—Interview with May Young" conducted by Jacqueline Wilkie, Lynn, Mass., 10 February 1979, under the supervision of R. Wayne Anderson, Department of History, Northeastern University.

working population? Is the predominance of a particular ethnic group in a declining industry peculiar to shoe production or is it a pattern which is repeated in other industries and other locales?

This examination of the rise of Jewish immigrants in Lynn from bench laborer to manufacturer is a rather specific study. Oral history and documentary evidence reveal that some enterprising Jewish shoe workers were able to become factory owners owing to certain national and local developments. Nationally, shoe production was a secondary, nonmonopoly industry which afforded opportunity to these Jewish immigrants. The fact that the industry was declining in the 1920s provided openings for upward movement for a particular segment of Lynn's Jewish population. There need to be many more studies of the origins and development of local businessmen in Lynn and in other industrial centers if we are fully to understand the history of manufacturing in the United States.³⁵

35. For an excellent model, see "The Reality of the Rags-to-Riches 'Myth': The case of the Paterson, New Jersey, Locomotive, Iron, and Machinery Manufacturers, 1830-1880," in Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture, & Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), pp. 211-33.

Women in the Shoe Industry: The Evidence from Lynn

By KEITH MELDER*

TWO persistent images have defined our perceptions of Lynn's women shoe workers: one literary—Lucy Larcom's sentimental verse, "Hannah Binding Shoes"; the other pictorial—a well-known *Leslie's Weekly* engraving of Lynn's lady shoe binders parading at Central Square during the great strike of 1860. One depicts woman as individual, passive, pitiable; the other shows women as members of a militant collective protest movement. Neither image tells much about the real life experiences of Lynn's women shoe workers. Both reflect, however, the quality of much evidence surviving from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: sparse, incomplete, inaccurate. Unlike the women textile workers of Lowell, who made a vivid impact on the consciousness of Americans, Lynn's women shoe workers have not been properly chronicled.¹

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1. On the history of working women in Lowell, the standard work is still Hannah Josephson, *The Golden Threads: New England's Mill Girls and Magnates* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1949). More recent, specialized accounts include Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Factory Girls* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Thomas Dublin, "Women, Work and Protest in the Early Lowell Mills: 'The Oppressing Hand of Avarice Would Enslave Us,'" *Labor History* 16(1975):99–116; and "Women, Work and the Family: Female Operatives in the Lowell Mills, 1830–1860," *Feminist Studies* 3(1975):30–39. Among the modern studies of labor and society in Lynn are John T. Cumbler, Jr., "Continuity and Disruption: Working-Class Community in Lynn and Fall River, Massachusetts, 1880–1950," Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1974; Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976); and Paul G. Faler, "Workingmen, Mechanics and Social Change: Lynn, Massachusetts, 1800–1860," Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1971. These works consider women incidentally in the larger social context. An unpublished essay of Mary H. Blewett, "Class Interest and Sex Role: Conflict over the Family Wage in the New England Shoe Strike of 1860," breaks new ground in interpreting women's participation in the 1860 Lynn shoe strike.

A good point of departure for examining the evidence is Lucy Larcom's bathos. "Hannah," the shoe binder, lost her heart to a Marble-head fisherman and never saw him again:

Poor lone Hannah
Sitting at the window, binding shoes,
Faded, wrinkled,
Sitting, stitching in a mournful muse.
Bright-eyed beauty once was she,
When the bloom was on the tree:
Spring and winter
Hannah's at the window binding shoes.²

Undoubtedly some women, like Hannah, faded away at shoe binding. More typically in Lynn, wives, daughters, and sisters of shoemakers contributed to the livelihood of their families by the vigorous use of their needles. Women had not always been involved in shoe manufacturing. But in Lynn from the time when craftsmen began to specialize in making women's shoes after 1750, females performed the work of binding or stitching the uppers at home as a kind of extension of housework. Unlike poor lonely Hannah, most women and girl shoe binders were vital parts of family units whose labor was essential to their survival. Although tedious and poorly rewarded, their work was accepted as legitimate and significant. A division of labor existed, based on gender, that fitted easily into established categories: men worked in shops in or near their homes, while women performed their essential roles inside their homes. Both worked with their hands and a few simple tools.³

Between roughly 1780 and 1850, Lynn became America's leading center for production of women's quality shoes. Shoemaking continued as a handicraft process, but the industry went through several phases of organization. As described in the studies of Blanche E. Hazard, these stages included the domestic putting-out system in which shoes were

2. Quoted in David N. Johnson, *Sketches of Lynn, or the Changes of Fifty Years* (Lynn: Thomas P. Nichols, 1880), pp. 338-40.

3. Edith Abbott, *Women in Industry: A Study in American Economic History* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1910), pp. 148-83, traces the general development of women's work in the shoe industry. See also Mary Blewett, David N. Johnson, and Blanche E. Hazard, *The Organization of the Boot and Shoe Industry in Massachusetts before 1875* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), for accounts of changing technology in the sewing of shoe uppers.

made to order for market until about 1810–1815. From these dates until about 1837, domestic production continued under changing organizational practices and with greater division of labor. During this period, capitalists in central shops had cutting and packing done in their miniature factories. Cut stock was distributed to women at home for binding, and the parts were assembled in small ten-footer shoe shops by men. A local newspaper described the role of the “bosses”:

The Shoe Manufacturers, or *Bosses*, as they are technically called, are the Shoe Merchants or shoedealers, who purchase the materials in large quantities, employ many males and females in the various branches of the manufacture, and sell the article by wholesale.⁴

A few account books remain to give evidence of the long hours spent by the early shoe binders and their meager rewards.⁵

In 1833 a new and more interesting form of evidence relating to women shoe workers appeared. About 1830 a Society of Journeymen Cordwainers was established to regulate prices paid to men. Late in 1833, the *Lynn Record* contained an advertisement urging that shoe binders attend a meeting to discuss the low prices paid for their labor. This well-attended meeting on 30 December resulted in the formation of the Female Society of Lynn and Vicinity for the Protection and Promotion of Female Industry. The women’s vigorous announcement of grievances represents a spirit of independence and respect for human dignity common among Lynn’s shoe workers—male and female:

They believe that no class of females have tasked themselves more severely. . . . They would reluctantly impute to their employers of the other sex, any unworthy motives, or any willingness to oppress them; but there appears to be somewhere a manifest *error*, a want of justice, and reasonable compensation to the females, which calls imperiously for redress. While the prices of *their* labour have been reduced, the business of their employers has appeared to be improving, and prosperous, enabling them to increase in wealth. These *things ought not so to be!* Equal rights should be extended to all—to the weaker sex as well as to the stronger.⁶

4. *Lynn Record*, 1 January 1834.

5. Old Sturbridge Village manuscript collections; Hazard, p. 229.

6. *Lynn Record*, 1 January, 1834.

For the next several months the *Record* published accounts of the shoe binders' organized activities and circulated a variety of opinions about the legitimacy of their efforts. In one of their addresses to the public, the shoe binders emphasized the familial nature of their employment, the need for wives to earn support for their children and for daughters to pay for their subsistence. Answering complaints that they were seeking to combine unfairly to raise their wages, the binders denounced the collaboration of employers to depress wages.⁷ Other newspaper reports explored some of the issues raised by women's efforts to take charge of their lives and depicted Lynn's ambivalence about such an unprecedented phenomenon.⁸ By June the binders were pleading for discipline and fortitude in the face of the manufacturers' resistance to the binders' quest for higher wages.

Ladies, we must be awake! Our meeting is at hand! Let each of us be at our posts, nothing doubting, but steadfast in our intentions of firmly adhering to our cause. We have accomplished much thus far. Let us not be unmindful that much more remains to be done before we can obtain the title of *free women*.

Despite the vivid rhetoric, evidence suggests that enthusiasm for the new organization was fast waning as management opposition continued.⁹

Coverage by the *Lynn Record* of this Female Society is tantalizing and finally very unsatisfactory, simply dropped or forgotten by the editor. How successful was the organization? Who were its chief promoters? How many members stuck to its goals? What became of the group? While we can be grateful even for these suggestions of early women's militance, the newspaper evidence raises far more questions than it answers. We know little more than that Lynn's women, like its men, cherished an early and strong belief in the equal rights of all producers—not just manufacturers—to organize in obtaining a just share of the proceeds of their work, and that women also experienced the strains of adjusting to early phases of the industrial revolution.

Women reappeared next on Lynn's organized labor scene during another outbreak of union activity, after July 1844, when the Mutual Benefit Society of the Journeymen Cordwainers of Lynn began publishing

7. *Lynn Record*, 8 January 1834.

8. *Lynn Record*, 26 February, 12, 19, 26 March, 18 June, 26 November 1834.

9. *Lynn Record*, 4 June 1834.

the city's first labor newspaper, the *Awl*. Before long, this paper carried contributions from women urging support from their sex for working-men's rights: "Ladies, one and all, arouse to action in this toil of mercy. Then shall your sons and daughters no longer wear the oppressor's yoke; peace, comfort, education, and all that is desirable shall be theirs."¹⁰ Women began attending the labor rallies along with men, and, by the end of the year, the *Awl* came out in favor of mixed tea parties as means of raising money and lifting the workers' spirits.

Unlike Lynn's women in 1834, the shoe binders of 1844 were approached by the press with an attitude of sentimentality. The *Awl* rejoiced that labor reform was not a political activity, so that labor's "lovely sisters" could join the movement: "But as it is strictly a moral enterprise, it opens to her willing heart a wide field of usefulness. . . . It is the cause of the poor and down-trodden. It would save the heart-strings of humanity from the iron heel of a merciless competition, and a grasping avarice." The cordwainers' paper was little different from publications like *Godey's Lady's Book* in its appreciation of woman's influence: "She holds in her hands a mighty power, and if she will only wield it with judgement and skill, she may do a vast work for her day and generation. Let her, then, enliven our meetings with her presence."¹¹ The *Awl* printed occasional news of the women's labor movement outside of Lynn, such as the Female Labor Reform Association of Lowell, and its vibrant leader, Sarah Bagley.¹² But more commonly the paper flattered its women readers:

Many a young woman who sits patiently at her work, sewing all day for her two or three cents an hour, and esteeming herself the lowliest of the lowly, has priceless talents locked up in the dark recesses of her soul which only wait for an occasion—which may never occur in *this* world—to burst out. . . .

The *Awl's* fair readers reciprocated. One "Mary" toasted the editor: "May the many smiles and bright eyes of the fair daughters of Lynn descend upon him, like the gentle dews of heaven, and cheer him on in his arduous duties."¹³

10. Lynn *Awl*, 11 September 1844.

11. Lynn *Awl*, 21 December 1845.

12. Lynn *Awl*, 19, 26 July 1845.

13. Lynn *Awl*, 11 January, 22 February 1845.

Two points are notable about this labor-sponsored newspaper. First, it tells very little about the experience of women shoe workers. We are assured in general terms that shoe binders deserved a greater reward for their arduous dedication. There is even a suggestion that equal pay should be provided for equal work, although equality of capacity is not asserted.¹⁴ Yet the actual experiences of women workers remain obscure. More revealing than the *Awl*'s omission of details about women's lives and work activities is its patronizing attitude toward its fair readers. Possibly the editor had imbibed the growing sexist tone of American society which was manifested in sentimental literature, in notions of female delicacy, and in restrictions laid on woman's "sphere." Quite likely the man in charge was simply a poor editor, conducting a sheet starved for intelligent material. Whatever the cause, its genteel views of women make the *Awl* appear less genuinely respectful of the shoe binders than earlier reflections contained in the *Lynn Record*.

Women entered into a third period of labor agitation in the Lynn press during the great shoe strike of 1860. Principal local papers of the time—the *Reporter*, *News*, and *Bay State*—published extensive accounts of women's participation in the largest strike in America before the Civil War. Data on this massive labor dispute have recently been ably interpreted by Professor Mary H. Blewett of the University of Lowell. The strike came in the aftermath of a long depression in Lynn's shoe industry, at a time when tensions were high because of progressive mechanization in shoemaking. Women had been particularly affected by application of stitching machinery, which first appeared in Lynn in 1852, to the process of sewing the shoe uppers—women's work.¹⁵ As it gathered momentum during the late 1850s, mechanization of shoe binding tended to shift work away from the traditional household, family-centered environment into the factories. It also reduced the ratio of women to men employees significantly.

The men promoting the great shoe strike of 1860 rallied their forces and soon brought forth an enthusiastic response from women shoe workers. Blewett's exhaustive analysis of newspaper evidence from Lynn, the New York and Boston papers, and local sheets from the shoe-making region of eastern New England uncovered evidence of a significant split among the women employees, between those who worked

14. *Lynn Awl*, 11 January 1845.

15. Mary Blewett, "Class Interest and Sex Role," pp. 3-6.

on stitching machines in factories and others who worked at home. This division of interest is not readily evident from local reports, however. Nor is it clear in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly* which published—as its descendants *Time* or *Newsweek* would have done—news sketches of the strike. *Leslie's* featured the novelty aspects of women actively engaged in a labor dispute, speaking out vehemently in meetings, marching in protest demonstrations, and taking collective action against male bosses. Although not really sympathetic to the women's cause, the *Leslie's* writer was continually impressed by their dedication, good will, and attractiveness.¹⁶

The *Lynn Bay State*, most sympathetic of local papers to the strike, gave detailed attention to women's activities. The editor seemed to view the whole episode with an attitude of amazement. Reporting on early meetings held by women in February 1860, the *Bay State* described them as dominated by and supportive of the men on strike. One column declared:

Good order prevailed, and the "gentler sex" showed, on this occasion, that they could not only be "gentle," but firm, resolute and decided, in defence of their rights, and in aid of their husbands, brothers and beaux, in the work of increasing their wages.¹⁷

A later report emphasized the unanimity between men and women striking for higher wages. On the strike's twelfth day, as the *Bay State* described it, men strikers from several Lynn wards received attractive hand-painted banners presented by their women. The next day, 7 March, despite snowy, blustery weather, a grand procession complete with military escort marched through Lynn's streets to portray the strikers' determination. The procession included some 700 or 800 women and a host of colorful banners.¹⁸ Day by day the *Bay State* provided a running account of the strike and women's varied contributions to it. Women were depicted as independent and self-interested, yet enthusiastic for the goals of men strikers.¹⁹ A great parade on 16 March fea-

16. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly*, 17 March 1860, pp. 239–40. See also Blewett's citations of Boston, New York, and other newspapers.

17. *Lynn Bay State*, 1 March 1860.

18. *Lynn Bay State*, 8 March 1860.

19. *Lynn Bay State*, 15, 22, 29 March, 5, 12 April 1860.

tured many banners with varied inspirational legends inciting women binders and machine operators to leave their work.

What happened as a result of the 1860 strike is not clear from published evidence. During the month of April the strikers apparently returned to work under the best terms they could obtain. A series of meetings led to formation of the "Ladies' Boot and Shoe Stitchers' and Finishers' Association, set up to act in concert with the men's Journey-men Cordwainers' Association of Lynn,—thereby combining our energies for our mutual benefit."²⁰

For all the lengthy newspaper accounts of the strike, we discover little information about its deeper meaning. The research of Professor Mary Blewett indicates that newspaper sources provide, at best, a superficial story of basic issues in the strike. At another level, describing the day-to-day working conditions endured by women, both at home and in shops, the newspapers are nearly useless. Nor, except as they depict the rather patronizing attitudes displayed in speeches from men strike leaders, do the newspapers tell much about how people felt. By implication—now questioned by Blewett—women sustained the century-old pattern of familial employment and collaboration with men in the making of shoes.

A totally new form of evidence appeared during the 1860 strike—the first pictorial representation of women in shoe factories and in the labor movement. In keeping with its mission of popularization, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly* sent an artist to sketch the Lynn scene during the labor struggle. Naturally his attention quickly settled on the "fair ones." A drawing of the great procession of 7 March appeared in *Leslie's* and has been reproduced in many publications since then (fig. 17).²¹ The wood engraving depicts women strikers parading through Central Square with a banner vividly inscribed: "American Ladies Will Not be Slaves / Give Us a Fair Compensation / And We Labour Cheerfully." The attractive young strikers are shown gallantly accompanied by smartly uniformed bandsmen and a militia company, followed by an endless procession of neighborhood units. A dense, attentive crowd looks on as the parade passes the Lynn railroad station. Wherever it has been reproduced, this illustration is intended to illustrate female militancy. The original image can be interpreted in other ways. In the context of

20. *Lynn Bay State*, 19, 26 April, 3 May 1860.

21. Mary Blewett, "Class Interest and Sex Role," notes, p. 2.

Lynn's tradition of equal rights, the procession probably represents the devotion of women to their equal rights to participate in the family trade rather than an assertion of woman's rights.

Other illustrations in the *Leslie's* series add to our information about women shoe workers.²² One picture shows women looking on while a few men strikers try to prevent shoe stock from being shipped away for manufacture. An important cut of a shoe factory of 1860 depicts six female stitching-machine operators working in a space designed for thirty. (Presumably the others are striking.) Three men are present, one of them (the owner?) in a top hat. The shop is fairly attractive, well-lighted and spacious, without an oppressive industrial atmosphere. A coal heating stove dominates the center. With thirty operatives, however, the crowded shop could become stifling in summer. How realistic is this illustration? We have no means of verifying its authenticity. Another illustration in the series, showing a man and two women at home waiting for the strike's end, presents the domestic aspect of shoe manufacturing.

Other pictures in the *Leslie's* group enlarge on the theme of women strikers in a curious, ambivalent fashion. Two views, an exterior and an interior, of the supposed home of Moll Pitcher (incorrectly described as a Revolutionary heroine) suggest a connection between women strikers and women in rebellion. Two final illustrations in the series characterize a "Great Clam Chowder Party of the Lady 'Strikers' of Lynn." Here, as the serious side of labor trouble gives way to a rural celebration, the comely young shoe workers are shown arriving at a picturesque country spot where young men have been preparing an outdoor chowder feast. What is the intent of *Leslie's* artist? He suggests the novelty and importance of women's involvement in labor strife, yet plays down the conflict inherent in the situation. As do other newspaper accounts, he evidently wants to emphasize the community of interests between the workers and manufacturers. Recent historians, such as Mary Blewett and Alan Dawley, however, interpret the strike as a conflict.²³

The strike of 1860 reminds us of another profound change in the lives of working women. During the 1850s and '60s old habits and rhythms of life were upset by new machines. Sewing machines, modified to stitch shoe uppers, appeared at three Lynn shoe shops in 1852. Here arti-

22. *Frank Leslie's*, 17, 24 March, 7 April 1860.

23. Blewett, esp. pp. 27-28; Dawley, *Class and Community*, pp. 84-89.

facts become primary sources of information, but, as in other areas of the documentation of everyday life, they scarcely exist. None of the early stitching machines is known to survive. A few engravings used to advertise the early machines survive in directories and newspapers of the 1860s. The illustrations depict crude contrivances powered by hand-cranked or foot-treadles, which must have been awkward to manipulate; still, the new machines increased productivity tremendously.²⁴ For a time in the late 1850s and '60s, the stitching machines were purchased or leased by women for use in their homes, but the introduction of steam power into many shoe factories during the 1860s made such a compromise arrangement obsolete.²⁵ Until early machinery can be studied and evaluated more fully, we must be content to speculate about its immediate impact.

Without knowing many specific details about early mechanization of women's work, we can be certain of some things. Stitching machinery took shoe work away from women's households and helped to make it less respectable for married women. It changed family economics and logistics. Before mechanization, wives and mothers could manage their homes and children while they worked. After moving into factories to work, they were hard pressed to combine shoemaking and motherhood. Their new working environments were dramatically different from the old. As the factory system matured, the scale of its operations grew until, by 1900, a hundred or more women stitchers and finishers might be brought together in immense rooms amidst incessant noise and filth. Workers climbed many flights of stairs or rode in large elevators to their machines. Shop regulations and regimentation replaced self-discipline. Some things did not change, however: the tedium of performing the same task over and over, the close attention required to complete the job, and a division of labor based on gender (with women confined to stitching, finishing, and packing rooms) remained as they had been.²⁶

Labor conflict characterized the mechanized shoe industry from 1860 onward. As they had done earlier, women took a prominent part in resisting the regimentation, speedups, wage reductions, and indignities

24. Grace R. Cooper, *The Invention of the Sewing Machine* (Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution Press, 1968), pp. 59–60, illustrations on pp. 75–121.

25. Blewett, pp. 5–6; Hazard, *Boot and Shoe Industry*, pp. 78–79, 119–20.

26. Hazard, pp. 160–67.

imposed by management. In the St. Crispin movement of the late 1860s and '70s, Lynn women followed the lead of the Knights of St. Crispin, forming in Lynn a lodge of the Daughters of St. Crispin. At a Lynn meeting in 1869 they helped to establish a National Grand Lodge of the Daughters. Two years later a Lynn newspaper carried complaints from shoe stitchers about wage reductions, working conditions, and pay policies. A "Boot and Shoe Stitchers' Union," probably affiliated with the Daughters of St. Crispin, existed at this time. In August 1871 these organized women, in language familiar to the community, "*Resolved*, that we, the free women of Lynn, will submit to no rule or set of rules that go towards enslaving or degrading us."²⁷ Regrettably, detailed evidence concerning the Daughters of St. Crispin is lacking, except for such occasional local newspaper references as those cited here, which indicate that women continued their lively involvement in the struggles of Lynn's shoeworkers.

Again between 1884 and 1887, unionism flourished in Lynn. The Knights of Labor became dominant in the city's shoe industry and by June 1885 claimed 8,000 members in twelve different assemblies.²⁸ For more than a year the workers published their own paper, the *Knight of Labor*. Though not primarily oriented toward women workers, the paper carried a "Ladies' Department" column with items of interest to female readers. More useful for historians are occasional references in this publication to the Lady Stitchers' Union, K of L Assembly No. 3016. In several numbers of the *Knight*, members of the union were urged to support boycotts against products of firms which had violated agreements with women stitchers. The reader senses a continual tension between the workers and their bosses.²⁹ Also evident is the union's function as an important social institution with its meetings, special celebrations, and informal activities.

In May 1886 the *Knight of Labor* published a painstakingly detailed Lady Stitchers' Union price list for working on shoes. Most of the piecework jobs include three grades or classifications related to the quality of the finish. According to the paper, prices had been arrived at and agreed upon by labor and management after long deliberations of a

27. *Lynn Reporter*, August 23, 1871; see also *Reporter* 31 July 1869, 2, 6 September 1871; Dawley, pp. 178-79.

28. *Lynn Knight of Labor*, 25 June 1885.

29. *Lynn Knight of Labor*, 11, 18 July 1885.

joint board of arbitration. The same board was empowered to adjust differences between women employees and their bosses. The price list is interesting for several reasons. It provides a detailed description of the acceptable limits and economic rewards of women's work. It suggests a major function of the union in stabilizing pay in an industry notable for wage cutting and cheating. As a published announcement, it was clearly intended to help maintain discipline among manufacturers and stitchers—by sustaining the shops' wage rates and by shaming workers willing to accept less than standard rates.³⁰

At the height of its influence, the *Knight* announced its devotion to the cause of unionism for women:

The opportunity for ladies and misses' [sic] to become enrolled in our ranks, however, have [sic] never received the attention its importance demands. True, the Ladies' Stitchers Assembly embraces more than twenty-seven hundred members, and is in a most flourishing condition, but none other than females employed at some branch of boot and shoemaking are admitted to its folds.³¹

The editor hoped to see women employees in every sort of enterprise enrolled in the Knights of Labor. Such confidence was sadly misplaced, however. In less than six months, for a number of complex reasons, the *Knight of Labor* was dead and the order itself in serious trouble. The success of the union's work among women stitchers grew out of Lynn's tradition of women's strong identification with a particular phase of shoemaking. Also, their vigorous organizations had long supported woman's right to work for a fair wage.

Evidence of this pattern persisted. It can be seen in accounts of early-twentieth-century labor organizations and disputes. During the controversy between the Boot and Shoe Workers Union and the locally based shoe cutters in 1903, women stitchers actively supported the local group.³² A survey of twentieth-century newspapers could not be undertaken for

30. Lynn *Knight of Labor*, 15 May 1886.

31. Lynn *Knight of Labor*, 15 May 1886. On the problems of the Knights' Department of Women's Work, see James J. Kenneally, "Women and Trade Unions 1870-1920: The Quandary of the Reformer," *Labor History*, winter 1973, pp. 42-55.

32. See John T. Cumbler, Jr., "Accommodation and Conflict: Shoe Workers in Twentieth-Century Lynn," in this catalog; Cumbler, "Continuity and Disruption," pp. 112-14.

this essay. It is likely, however, that such a survey would document the participation of women in labor's struggles, looking after their independent interests, yet supportive of men's unions.

Another kind of evidence dates from the early twentieth century: the images created by photography. Several photographers worked in Lynn's shoe factories to record workers and their environments. The majority of pictures were evidently taken for the simple purpose of marketing them to the subjects—the workers themselves.³³ Others were sponsored by management for record or promotional purposes. They show women doing a variety of jobs—stitching of different kinds, punching, stamping, inspecting, finishing, checking, packing. A few pictures include foremen or foreladies. One image commissioned by A. E. Little and Company (perhaps in response to a labor dispute?) even has an attractive group of women gathered around a piano at the factory to sing "Smiles." There is a certain artificiality about many of these photographs. Nevertheless, they provide information unavailable elsewhere about the industrial environment. They show the clutter and debris, the crowding of workers near windows for light, machinery, and tools. They show how the workers dressed and sat or stood to work. Although generally posed and stilted, the photographs clearly document the congestion and regimentation of industrial life. The subjects express an overall air of fatigue. More than any written evidence, these photographs provide an authentic look at how it *was* to spend every day in the factory. The scene is anything but romantic (fig. 18).

A different sort of impression emerges from a series of photographs taken by a very gifted woman who made at least twenty prints of women in Lynn's shoe factories. Frances Benjamin Johnston, a Washington, D.C., photographer whose work has only recently received modern attention, probably came to Lynn between 1900 and 1902.³⁴ The source of her commission is not now clear, but several of the Lynn pictures were used to illustrate a book of social concern, *The Woman*

33. Photographs of factory interiors are found in the Lynn Historical Society and the Lynn Public Library; others have been assembled in a contest sponsored in 1979 by the Essex Institute, the Lynn Historical Society, and the Lynn Public Library.

34. Frances Benjamin Johnston photographs are in the collection of the Division of Prints and Photographs in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. On Johnston's career, see Pete Daniel and Raymond Smock, *A Talent for Detail: The Photographs of Miss Frances Benjamin Johnston* (New York: Harmony Books, 1974). A catalog of Johnston's works is under preparation for the Library of Congress by Anne Peterson.

Who Toils: Being the Experience of Two Gentlewomen as Factory Girls, published in 1903, by Mrs. John Van Vorst and Marie Van Vorst. Judging by the results, Frances Benjamin Johnston set out to show the “human side” of shoe manufacturing to engage the sympathy of her audience. Despite being somewhat contrived, her pictures do this well.

The people in her photographs deliberately reflect a range of age and appearance, from the young wide-eyed innocent girl, to the competent middle-aged veteran, to the aged, fragile grandmother who ought to be enjoying the leisure of retirement (fig. 19). The work process is also explored in these photographs. Women are shown at stitching machines, gumming or cementing leather uppers, stamping leather, tying laces, or inspecting the work (fig. 20). The people are portrayed sympathetically; their tasks are explicitly repetitive and monotonous. Curiously, most of the workers are shown individually or in small groups. No image in the series portrays the atmosphere of mass discipline and congestion conveyed by the photos of factory groups done by less artistic photographers. Some of the tools and machines operated by women are pictured in great detail (fig. 21).

Johnston took several excellent photographs of the outdoor industrial environment. Ranges of factory buildings, overbearing and out of touch with human scale, dominate the city in these pictures. Two views taken of children at play in a dense residential neighborhood of tenement houses and triple-decker dwellings illustrate human uses of the outdoor urban spaces. Johnston even caught a woman engaged in the homely task of hanging out a washing. Although a shade too arty to be true to life, the Johnston photographs evoke women’s experiences in the Lynn industrial environment.

By the early twentieth century, working women were viewed by many sensitive Americans as a *problem*. Evidence of this attitude emerges in some of the printed sources surviving from the period. An obscure promotional pamphlet issued in 1906 by A. E. Little and Company, makers of Sorosis shoes, describes one approach to this problem—the Sorosis Annex, a clubhouse for female employees:

Entirely apart from the factory atmosphere, this spacious house, with its well-furnished rooms and delightful grounds and environment, affords a charming retreat, amid refining influences and homelike surroundings, for leisure hours; and in the event of ill-

ness a Sorosis girl is always sure of careful nursing here. The club... is but one of several means the makers of Sorosis shoes have employed to put into practice the theory that the obligation of an employer to his employees does not end with mere payment of wages for labor done.³⁵

The Annex probably also helped to discourage the "girls" from joining the Stitchers' Union.

Hardly less curious than the Sorosis Annex is the volume already mentioned, *The Woman Who Toils*. Seeking, in the form of a genteel exposé, to depict the "beauty of toil" in American industry, the upper-class authors tried to pose as American working women in several different occupations. Marie Van Vorst, who played at working in the Lynn shoe factories, explained her purpose: "I intended, in so far as was possible, to live as she [the working woman] lived, work as she worked. In thus approaching her I believed that I could share her ambitions, her pleasures, her privations."³⁶ Although badly flawed by the author's patronizing attitudes and utter inability to shed her class prejudices, Van Vorst's experience in Lynn is useful in illustrating how much the shoe industry had changed as a woman's occupation in fifty years. Instead of being a native-born married woman working on shoes in her home, the typical early-twentieth-century shoe worker was a single woman, self-supporting, more than likely foreign-born, boarding with a family or occupying a room in a lodging house. Van Vorst provides a sketch of the circumstances and cultural context of women's working lives at the turn of the century. More than this, she suggests a significant change in attitudes toward women's work. In the mid-nineteenth century Lynn families supposed it to be natural, even inevitable, for married women to work for pay. Van Vorst reports that by 1900 respectable married women did not expect to be gainfully employed.³⁷

More clearly confronting the problems of working women in the shoe industry was a publication of the Women's Educational and Indus-

35. *From the Sandal to Sorosis* (Lynn: A. E. Little & Co., 1906), pp. 8, 18.

36. Mrs. John Van Vorst and Marie Van Vorst, *The Woman Who Toils: Being the Experiences of Two Gentlewomen as Factory Girls* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1903), pp. 167, 171-214.

37. *The Woman Who Toils*. . . , pp. 195-96; on the respectability of married and middle-class women working, see Robert W. Smuts, *Women and Work in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 48-49, 55-58, Chapter 4.

trial Union of Boston—a progressive social welfare organization. *The Boot and Shoe Industry in Massachusetts as a Vocation for Women*, published in 1915, is a useful introduction to early-twentieth-century shoemaking for several reasons. It provides a readable summary of the many technical processes required to manufacture shoes at this time, with special reference to different employments in the stitching room. It also contains brief but valuable descriptions of the characteristics of women workers in Lynn and some of the city's social and environmental conditions for women workers.

Several statistical analyses remind us of Lynn's unusual situation among shoe-manufacturing cities. A higher percentage of women in the shoe factories of Lynn were married than in any other city surveyed in the study—almost exactly one-third. Lynn also employed more women—nearly forty percent of its total shoe factory labor force—than any other city in Massachusetts. The study gives close attention to the wages and earnings of women workers, the seasonal fluctuations in pay and employment, and the causes of changes in earnings. A brief description of the labor movement in Lynn characterizes union organization as “chaotic” and finds women's participation in union business low. The Women's Educational and Industrial Union displayed strong ambivalence toward women workers. Men were described as “natural breadwinners,” yet women's need for income was evident and admitted. The *problem* of women's employment in the shoe industry receives sympathetic, lucid, and wide-ranging treatment in this report.³⁸

More recent historical studies of Lynn have been able to look beyond the *problem* of women's employment in shoemaking and to tap new kinds of social data for evidence of women at work. Three kinds of promising source material are beginning to attract scholars of Lynn's social history: manuscript census returns, city directories, and oral history interviews.³⁹ These sources can provide details about previously inarticulate, “anonymous” people—including most of the women shoe work-

38. Women's Educational and Industrial Union, Boston, Department of Research, *The Boot and Shoe Industry in Massachusetts as a Vocation for Women*, Bulletin of the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Whole No. 180 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1915).

39. Among the scholars using new sources of evidence are John T. Cumbler, Jr., Alan Dawley, and Paul Faler. Mary Blewett is experimenting with application of new techniques to the study of women in the shoe industry. Because of the masculine bias of census returns and city directories, these experiments are particularly difficult and important.

ers. Census returns and city directories both contain a built-in male bias in their descriptions of households in terms of their “heads”—usually husbands. Thus, for example, in the census of 1860, most women shoe workers—wives of shoemakers—were overlooked because the census takers interpreted wives as dependents, thus not gainfully employed. The work in progress of Professor Mary Blewett explores these issues and experiments with the use of basic statistical information derived from census and directory data.

The current Shoe City exhibition project at the Essex Institute has fortunately been able to assemble a quantity of valuable taped interviews from oral history informants. Numerous former shoe workers, including women, have been recorded in an effort organized by Professor John Fox of Salem State College, using students from the college and other volunteers. Other volunteers, directed by Professor Wayne Anderson of Northeastern University, have provided additional tape-recorded interviews. These recollections of people associated with the shoe industry are being prepared at the Essex Institute for use and study. They will help us to understand the experiences and attitudes of women who worked at making shoes during the industry’s late years in Lynn.⁴⁰ Asking new questions and using new sources of information, social historians are beginning to chart new courses in the investigation and interpretation of the women shoe workers of Lynn.

Many changes in the techniques of shoe manufacturing have affected women’s industrial roles since Lucy Larcom’s “Hannah,” and a review of the available evidence has permitted us to construct more valid interpretations of shoe workers’ experiences than the sentimental poet could achieve. Nevertheless, we are not much further along in understanding the critical issues. What does the evidence tell us? It says more about the attitudes of people who collected it—chiefly men—than it does about women’s experiences as workers. It documents in a haphazard way women’s involvement in the labor movement, but has little to say about aspirations of women union members. The evidence clearly indicates the sex-based division of labor in shoe manufacturing, but does not record what people thought of this division of labor. Much of the data on women in industry has thus far been inaccessible, and what information does exist is spotty at best.

40. It is hoped that these tapes with indices and transcriptions will be available in the library of the Essex Institute by 1980.

Still, there is hope. The strides already made by social historians are highly encouraging. Great possibilities exist for imaginative, energetic research in reconstructing evidence of these anonymous women's lives. What is needed now are the young scholars who will pursue this subject down to its roots.

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